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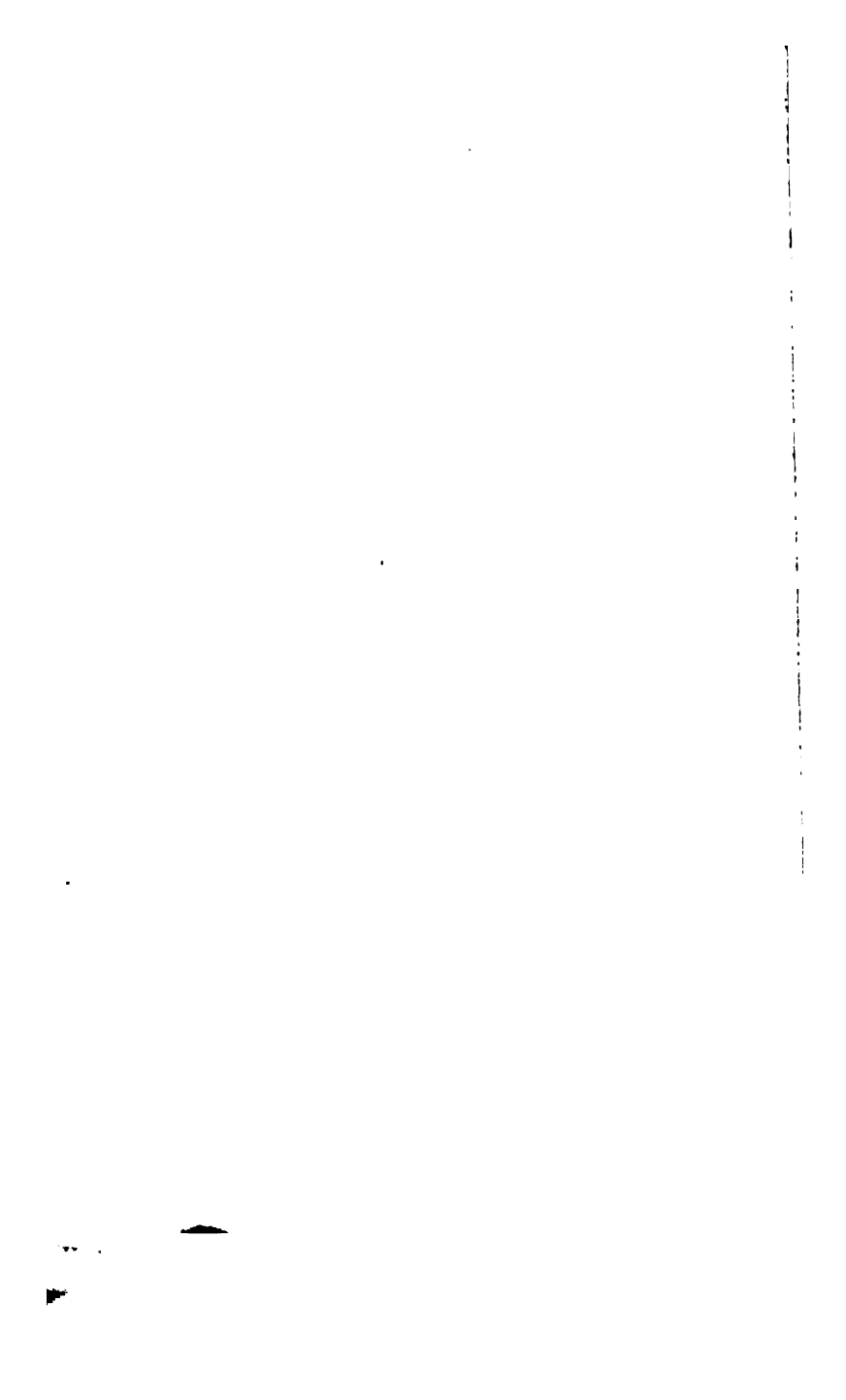
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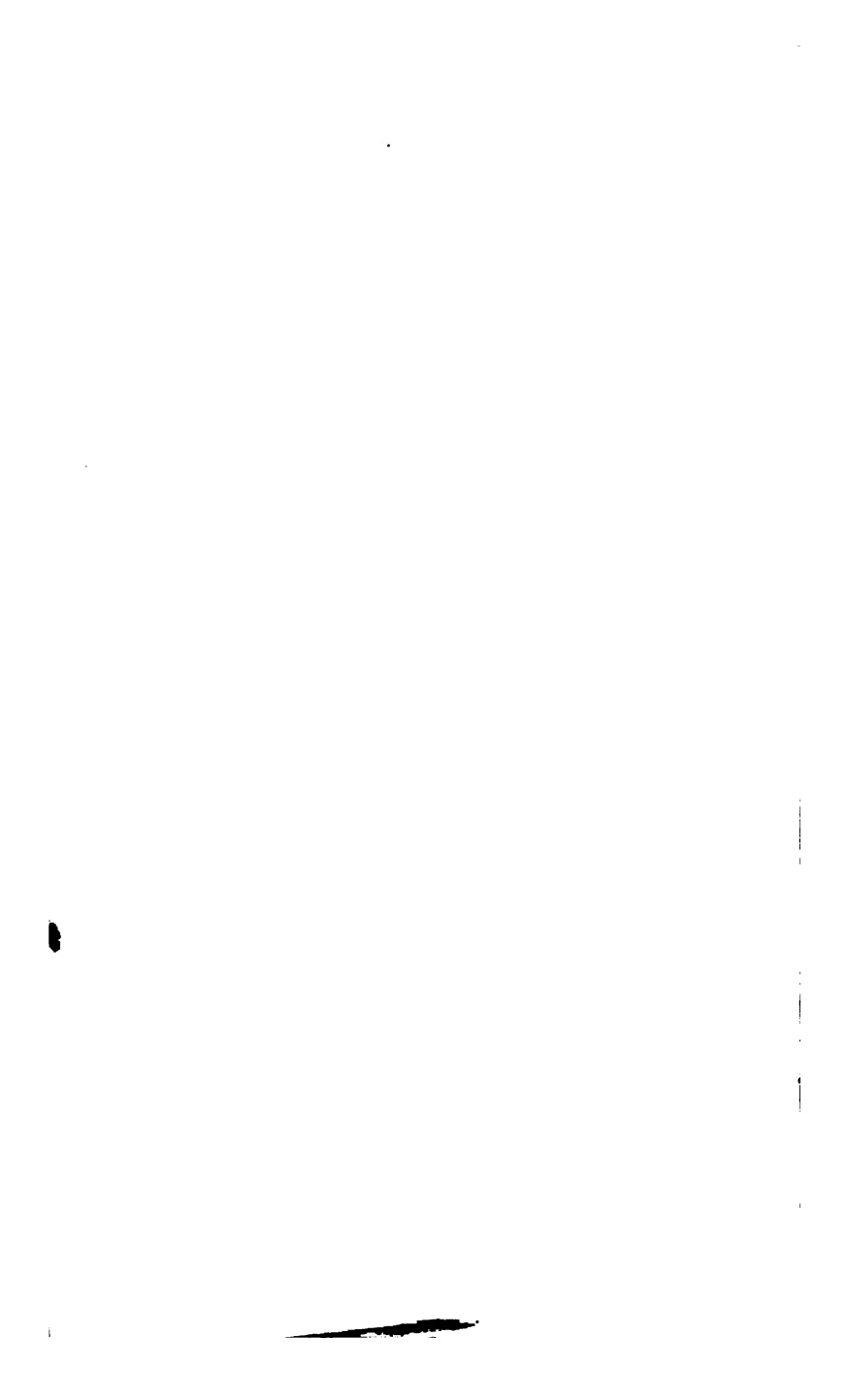
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1875

1875

E. Pisani, Mme Marianna,

VANDELEUR;
OR,
ANIMAL MAGNETISM.
A NOVEL.

Ye shall have miracles, ay, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything but true.
Velled Prophet.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1836.

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P R E F A C E.


WHEN I first determined upon writing a tale of fiction as a resource against "leisure hours"—those mental vampires which suck out all the health of fitful occupation—I was particularly desirous of fixing upon an entirely new subject. It is said that our every motive is of a compound nature, but as far as I have been able to analyse my motive for this, I can find no ingredient but the one of simple and unmixed humility; that is, as much humility as may be consistent with writing at all in these days. I am aware that as a good housewife is said to

"Gar auld claes look 'maist as weel's the new,"

so a very skilful writer can dress up a threadbare subject so tastefully, that if it had itself



dished up in so many different forms for the public taste, that not only is "the boudoir" itself as familiar to the vulgar eyes as the sign upon the windows of their own circulating libraries, but every lamp and every lustre belonging thereto is nightly burned in effigy in their own "squalid parlours." So that really, unless by having recourse to the cuisine itself, I should not now know how to cater to the appetites of folk so greedy after "*high living*." Then for the converse of the human picture, the lower Irish, who live professedly "by their ways and their *manes*;" has that subject not been exhausted between open enmities and *nominal lovers* until their own orthography, if not pronunciation, becomes correct, and the *means* being gone, their *ma-nes* alone remain? Thus, between ghosts and gourmands, the spirit and the flesh, I was nearly scared altogether from my undertaking, when an opportune visit to Paris, by introducing "animal magnetism" to my notice, suggested to me that the point I



sought "might lie between"—it professing to be that mysterious point between mind and matter, too material in its effects to be all mind, and too subtle to be all matter !

Seriously, a particular circumstance brought the subject under my consideration in a very striking and a very startling point of view ; and if the reference I have given must not necessarily prove more satisfactory than any assertion from an anonymous writer, I assure my readers that " I could a tale unfold," the slightest word of which would justify me for making the theory the foundation of *a novel* ! —Still, justification falls so far short of approbation, and acquittal of applause, that I had no sooner attained the object of my ambition —an unhacknied subject, than I began to fear that it was *too* foreign to English sympathies, and that I should only draw upon myself that ridicule with which the subject has hitherto been treated here. Against this, the only defence I have to offer (without again

referring to the testimony of foreign but enlightened nations) is, that since a learned body has not disdained to make animal magnetism a subject of investigation, surely it should not be considered as beneath the dignity of a novel. But a truce to hopes and fears—to arguments and reasonings ; I have launched my little bark on the tide of public opinion, and all I can say now in its favour will indeed be talking to the winds. The public breath alone can swell my sails, and as I have left the cape of *good hope* far behind me, I now equally dread the dead calm of neglect, or the storms of harsh criticism, and put my trust in the *trade winds* ; praying, that instead of “blasts from hell” to damn my humble venture, they may prove “airs from heaven” to waft me “unto the wished-for haven of my bliss.”

V A N D E L E U R.

CHAPTER I.

'Tis not the painted canvass I admire,
However curiously the hues are blent ;
I seek the magic touch of living fire,
That needs no guide to tell us what is meant.

ANONYMOUS.

MY friends and acquaintances consider me particularly deficient in what is commonly called "a taste for drawing;" which "taste" being rather prevalent in our family, the imputed want of it has been a source of not unfrequent mortification to me in my younger days. The half pettish, half contemptuous exclamation, "Oh no! not to *her*, *she* does not care for it, *she* has no taste for drawing," of some young

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all the dreamy delight of a romance read in some speaking eye, or some tragedy in the haughty and revengeful lip. And if this blending of story and of painting was a sin against the latter, I can only say as I have said before, and as others have said for me, that "I have no taste for drawing."

Of all the paintings, whether compositions or portraits, that have ever arrested my fancy or my feelings, I never remember to have been more irresistibly interested by any, than by three which are now (at least were, a very short time since,) to be seen in the picture-gallery of the Duchess of ———, in ———shire. They boast no foreign name, and are evidently of the modern school; but there is so much of truth, of nature—that undefinable something about them, that I was impressed at once with the conviction that the subject was not merely fanciful. But if already I was inclined to admire them as, at least, masterpieces of very cunning workmanship from the pencil of an amateur, (as the artist was

described in the catalogue to be,) most assuredly, when circumstances afterwards brought to my knowledge the outline of their history, with permission to weave it into a little tale, it did not lessen my interest in them, or dispose me to behold them with a more critical eye.

The first of the three portraits which thus engaged my attention, was that of a young girl, apparently about fifteen or sixteen years of age, and a boy somewhat younger, whose arms fondly entwined around each other, as they appeared to stroll along, gave one the idea of what children born to our first parents before their fall might have been. You saw at a glance that they were not lovers ; for, besides the early youth of the boy, there was a character about their love and their familiarity, that can be described best by negatives. It was free from all appearance of anxiety, free from all emotion, free from any of "love's delicious agonies." They looked as if they had just fallen from heaven together, and knew nothing yet of the ills of earth. Be-

sides, they were extremely like each other. Her eyes, indeed, were of a softer blue, and her ringlets, though dark as the raven's wing, were more silky and more luxuriant than his, and her lips were plumper and more round ; still, there was the indescribable family likeness strongly impressed, and I knew that they were brother and sister. It seemed to be some interesting moment in their young lives ; for the girl's countenance betrayed a sweet and joyous consciousness, as her beautiful forget-me-not eyes encountered those of her brother, which looked down upon them in return with an expression of arch affection. The scene, too, was one that might have served for a representation of paradise. It was a rich and glowing sunset ; and the fair artist, who I afterwards discovered was an Englishwoman by descent and birth, must certainly have caught those glowing colours from an Italian sky, or else have seized in happy hour, with the inspiration of genius,

one of those rare and delicious evenings in an English summer that are sometimes sent to us in mind of heaven. She always declared it was the latter.

The second picture presented the same lovely female figure in lineaments that could not be mistaken ; but, gracious Heaven ! how changed ! Where was the blooming cheek ? the smiling eyes ? the halo of unbroken, unfearing happiness ?—All, all were changed or gone. The look of very early youth indeed still lingered there ; but it was only to lend a heightened effect to the death-like hue of her attenuated countenance, and to give a yet wilder animation to the agony it expressed. She was dressed in the most costly fashion, and her arms loaded with ornaments ; all of which formed a striking and painful contrast to her air of desolation and supplication, as, with upraised eyes, and hands that seemed grasped together in convulsive agony, she knelt at the feet of another lady, of

whom a beautiful side-view was presented. The scene was a saloon, evidently of Continental magnificence.

The third picture was the interior of a cottage-porch, with a glimpse of a wild Alpine landscape. Sitting within the porch was the same lady, but no longer young, and a gentleman, who might be some ten years older. He was not the hero of the first piece ; for the eyes of the boy were blue like his sister's, while those of the present portrait were of a rich black, more deep than bright, as they are wont to be when subdued by sorrow and anxiety. The air of the gentleman was strikingly noble,—I should have said military, but there was nothing in his dress to confirm this idea.

The wild agony which the countenance of the female in the second picture expressed, was here softened down to a calm and heavenly resignation and pensiveness. The brow and even the cheek were still of marble whiteness ; but it seemed to speak of sorrow that had nearly passed

away, and only left those enduring traces to mark where it once had been. She was still eminently lovely ; and although from having the first picture still before you, in which she seemed a creature invested with perpetual youth, health, and happiness, you could not fail to perceive that Time must now have passed his cold wing over her, yet it was only that circumstance which seemed to remind you of it. Had you seen her now for the first time, her age would never have come into your imagination, at once led captive by her loveliness and peculiar air of resignation. Her jet black hair was uncovered, yet gave no air of coquetry, or of a lingering after other days ; for it was so inartificially arranged as to be evidently a matter of no moment to her, and you knew at once from her whole air and appearance, that it was rather in utter disregard to personal adornment, than with any view to admiration, that she wore no head-dress but that with which Nature had provided her. Her hair was entirely brushed away from

her temples at each side, and loosely folded up behind. Her head was beautiful ; it required no adept in phrenology to admire it—Nature asserted her own power without the rules of art ; and although ignorance might be unable to trace the cause of its own spontaneous admiration to beautiful proportions and noble developement, the pleasing effect was not the less felt. There was something in every line of that head that diffused an air of irresistible interest around her. Her form, too, was lovely ; though few besides herself would have stood the test of her dishabille. She was wrapt in a loose white muslin robe ; which if the worst costume that could have been selected for effect in painting, gave, to my mind, perhaps for that very reason, an air of truth and reality to the whole, that weighed more with me (anti-connoisseur as I have avowed myself) than the most judicious management of light and shade could have done.

The lady was in the very act of withdrawing

her hand (and it was a hand of exquisite symmetry, where youth still lingered in round and dimpled smoothness) from the arm of the gentleman, where you saw, or perhaps only felt, that it had rested the moment before, in earnest persuasion, but was hastily removed, as his hand (also still suspended) was about to be laid upon it. She did not look indignant, still less haughty, and no colour had rushed to that bloodless cheek ; but her whole air was that of startled matron delicacy, and her eyes met his with a look of gentle, but soul-touching reproof, in which was mingled a ray of affection, such as I have never seen equalled upon earth. It was the love of an angel for a mortal soul ; it was the love of a purified spirit for one which was not yet all of heaven.

The gentleman was evidently rebuked in her presence ; yet it was rather as a mortal might feel in the presence of a being of a higher sphere, than the angry humiliation of one erring creature before another. His whole manner be-

trayed a mixture of sorrow and adoration. I was utterly at a loss to conjecture what the subject of this picture could be, or in what relation or position the parties stood to each other ; and I became so deeply interested in them altogether, that when I was some time after favoured with their history, I took a considerable journey for the sole purpose of looking once more upon those countenances, with which I felt so intimately acquainted ; and I have since sat for hours together gazing upon them, until I have fancied that the lips absolutely moved, and gave utterance to the feelings that I now learned had been working in the hearts of the originals. And in filling up the outlines of the story, I have at times been almost persuaded that I myself heard the words uttered, and the sentiments expressed, which I only received at second-hand.

Partly perhaps in the hope of inspiring my readers with something of the same in-

terest that was thus awakened in my own breast, I have selected the subject of the first picture for the opening scene of the little history I have undertaken to present them with.

CHAPTER II.

At intervals some bird from out the brakes
Starts into voice a moment—then is still :
There seems a floating whisper on the hill ;
But that is fancy, for the starlight dews
All silently their tears of love distill,
Weeping themselves away till they infuse
Deep into Nature's breast the spirit of her hues.
BYRON.

It was one of the loveliest evenings in the loveliest month of an English summer. The day had been sultry, bright and beautiful ; birds had been even clamorous in melody, vying, as it were, with each other in songs of praise and gratitude for the pleasure it afforded them : trees looked darker and richer from the repose of their thick foliage ; rare flowers had confidently expanded their delicate petals

to the genial glow that was abroad ; and there seemed to be more light in the world than we are accustomed to enjoy. Nature was not only smiling, but joyously laughing all around. It seemed as if the very fishes, the dullest and coldest of organised beings, grew reasoning creatures upon such a day, and supposing that its influence must be felt by all, even by the tyrant man, forsook the safety of their protecting element, and ventured to the surface of the waters to take their share in the universal joy. In short, it had been one of those days when the sun and our earth are evidently in good humour with each other. He smiled brightly on her, and she repaid him a thousand-fold with all her charms. Yet that day had passed away, —ay, even as the brightest dreams of youth ! It had passed ; yet, like the “sober sadness” of the breast that once beat highest to those bright hopes, the very evening of such a day was worth the noontide of any other. The warmer beams indeed were gone ; yet their delightful influence

still was felt in the soft, balmy, genial temperature that remained. The birds, the bees, the butterflies had all vanished ; yet even of them one would have said some soft, impalpable, undefinable charm still lingered in the dreamy, undulating hum, which, though gradually becoming fainter and fainter, was still about ; and if some delicate flowers had closed their bosoms from the breath of evening, others there were, and perhaps the sweetest, which gave out their fragrance with less coyness now.

The evening was lovely everywhere ; but perhaps there was scarcely a scene more calculated to receive and display its delicious influence to advantage, than Beauton Park.

Beauton Park had been for many generations the family mansion and principal residence of an old English family, of wealth and local respectability, but of whose members none had ever risen, or seemed desirous to rise, to the peerage, or to any particular eminence in church or state. They were good easy folk, whose harmless

ambition was satisfied with the glory that was acquired for their country, independent of any exertions of theirs ; and while they paid their taxes punctually, and religiously kept up what they called the good old English sports and customs, they conceived that they had as good a right to bask in the beams of that glory, as any other well-born Englishman. It need scarcely be added, that they were not a family remarkable for talent ; yet, as their friends and neighbours sometimes were heard to declare, “ they were no fools ; ” and being a remarkably handsome race, the gentlemen, whose habits of locomotion (though still very limited) were yet more extended than those of the females, not unfrequently made a conquest of some faded fashionable, either at a race-ball in some country-town, where she had retired to rusticate for a season, or at some watering-place, whither she had repaired in the hope of reviving her faded roses. But somehow it was remarked, that these marriages, though they served to prevent

the family from falling into utter rusticity, seldom turned out happily.

The Evelyns, though good-humoured, and, on the whole, well-disposed and kind-hearted men, had too much of old English — what shall I call it? *boorishness*? or *dignity*? (my readers may choose the term,) to be guided much by the fancies of their wives; and although as “gay young bachelors” they thought it only reasonable, and right, that they should themselves see a little of life, at Tunbridge or at Bath, still the moment they had slipped their necks into the marriage-noose, being downright, well-meaning folk, they could see no further business they could have, beyond the county-town where the assizes were held, or the most extended run that Reynard was pleased to favour them with. Still less, of course, could they conceive any justifiable reason for their ladies’ wish to rove; and she who married with the idea of favouring her handsome, but country-bred husband, with her company during the

summer months, enlivened by the presence of a thousand-and-one dear friends, in succession from the metropolis, on condition of his making her a handsome present every spring for her London expenses, invariably found herself most wofully mistaken; and although the first year's refusal might be accompanied only by a laughing and good-humoured determination, the second generally was ushered in with a few nationally characteristic asseverations, that put an end to the lady's hopes, if not to her resentment, on the subject for ever.

This Blue-Beard custom of the Evelyns seemed to be a sort of family heir-loom,—a kind of hereditary principle, which each in succession held as sacred and inviolate as the laws of the Medes and Persians were held, and perhaps for no better reason than the good old English maxim, to “do as our fathers have done before us.” What a blessing it is that this imbecile maxim is going out of fashion! Innovation may in some cases be dangerous; but who never

ventures can never win. To adhere blindly to the habits of our forefathers, merely because they were such, is not only to presuppose them “the wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best,” but, even giving full scope to those filial feelings, it is presupposing likewise, that everything else around us—in fact every circumstance—has continued in precisely the same situation as when our predecessors acted in such or such a manner, or laid down such or such rules ; (by the bye, I agree with Lord Byron in hating “invariable rules ;”) and this I believe no one is prepared to assert on any subject. The alternative is, that we are shutting our own eyes, to be guided by charts given us by persons who never trod the path, themselves : for it is no longer the same path, if new turnings and new windings have been made since their day ; so that pitfalls may now be yawning, where once were “ways of pleasantness, and paths of peace.”

To return to the Evelyns : it must be ac-

known, that if ever gentlemen could be excusable, (and far be it from me to say that they could,) for immuring their wives in the country, and denying them the pleasures of the metropolis, the proprietors of Beauton Park might surely put in their claims for forgiveness. That very extensive demesne, situated in one of the southern counties of England, seemed to contain within itself almost all that the heart of man could desire, or woman either. The dwelling-house, to which frequent and judicious additions had been made, was a noble mansion : it stood upon a gentle slope, which at a little distance became more decidedly elevated, so that the house was sheltered and shut in on three sides by deep hanging woods, and the fourth looked out upon a splendid lawn, studded with noble inhabitants, both animate and inanimate ; for the beautiful deer were so numerous, as sometimes, in the distance, amongst the tall trees, to be mistaken for underwood.

As if to make amends to the ladies of the

family for their seclusion from gayer haunts, and perhaps not a little to escape the trouble themselves, the proprietors of Beanton Park generally permitted their wives to exercise unlimited control over the ornamental parts of the demesne; and the result, as may be supposed, was at all times whimsical, and frequently very beautiful:—deep-tangled walks, unlooked-for glades, “mosques beside Grecian temples,” deserts in the very bosom of forests, and not unfrequently *jets d’eaux* on the top of a favourite hill; in short, every variety that taste, or caprice, or both united, could suggest, was realised there. There was at the southern side of the mansion a gentle gradual declivity before the bolder hill on that side began to rise again; and as one of the windows of a summer sitting-room looked out upon this side, it was soon made to breathe of all the mingled sweets of Araby, and the humble green in which Nature had decked it was exchanged for the many-coloured parterre. A sort of little road or narrow

strip of valley, that ran between this declivity and the higher chain of hills, which formed a sort of amphitheatre round the house, was closely planted with dark evergreens, and sweet flowering shrubs, which blending in gradation with the woods that clothed the hills to their very base, gave to the descent a strange and almost mysterious termination ; the evergreens being planted so close that their tops seemed to form the level of the little valley. Amongst them and the overhanging wood, with which they mingled, ran paths so varied and so devious, as not only to be called, but really to be worthy of the name of, Labyrinth ; and not unfrequently have persons, who came to visit a place so abundant in beauties, expressed their very rational astonishment, how the “Cynthia of the minute” could ever tire in a place of such variety : for of course the domestic grievances of the Evelyns, like all other domestic grievances, soon escaped from their only legitimate bounds—namely, their own bosoms ; I will not even say—firesides.

The gentleman who was in possession of Beanton Park, by right of inheritance, at the time in which this story commences, differed very little, either in his virtues, or his faults, or even in his family circumstances, from those who had gone before him. He was one of the best and handsomest among them, and had, in his turn, picked up a fair and delicate wife, from the hotbed of fashionable life, who had come to seek the renovation of a fragile constitution at the springs of Bath. She was an earl's daughter, and if her fortune was small, she was reputed to be "extremely talented;" and although, for some unaccountable reason, that advantage did not seem to atone, in the eyes of her London admirers, for other deficiencies, still it was a circumstance very likely to render her more difficult of access, and therefore, by human perversity, a more desirable acquaintance in the eyes of unsophisticated youths from the country. When, therefore, she condescended to smile upon the extremely

handsome and wealthy master of Beauton Park, can it be wondered at, that the flattered Corydon knelt at her feet, and only rose on her consenting that he should lead her to the altar ?

Lady Alicia was, however, really a talented person, and naturally amiable ; but somehow in those days (fifty years since) people did not know how to manage talented daughters. First-rate and extraordinary talents will, of course, at all times, and in all circumstances, make their own way ; but how many minds, a degree or two lower in the scale, have, for want of judicious culture, and sufficient aliment and exercise, withered, and stagnated into dull pedantry, or turned aside into some wild and fearful paths, even although

“ The light that led astray was light from heaven ! ”

And surely, when such were the results, it is not to be wondered at that men conceived a horror, and even a terror, of what were called “ learned ladies.” It is at least, I think, a much more rational way of accounting for their having

entertained such feelings towards them, than the common, and to me ever absurd, explanation of *envy* ; ay, even though some specimens of the nobler sex, ignorant enough themselves to make it credible, may have shrugged their silly shoulders, and generously pleaded guilty to the charge for the whole fraternity.

However, the kind of cleverness which Lady Alicia possessed did not lead her into exactly either of those extremes. It was not brilliant enough for the one, and it was too gentle for the other ; but its fate was not to herself much better. She married Mr. Evelyn, as many others had done his ancestors, in the hope of leading him into fashionable life ; but when she found the family failing incurably strong in him, she gave up the point, determining within herself, that since he would not associate with her friends, she would not with his ; and accordingly, under the plea of delicate health, she confined herself by degrees almost entirely to her own apartments, and in sullen disappointment

broke off nearly all correspondence even with her own family.

This, to a person gifted with talents, and situated in the country as she was, might all have been very well, had she ever been taught to turn those talents to good account; or had she even been taught the necessity of keeping them in control of any kind, in order that they might not turn upon and rend her. But she had not been taught this; and the consequence was, that fancy and imagination, left to their own devices, soon made out food for themselves on the subject of her health, and she became a confirmed valetudinarian. The successive births of two lovely children, a boy and a girl, for a time diverted her attention from this fatal subject; and she even undertook, as the children advanced from infancy to childhood, to be their instructress. But this could not continue long: both the children, as will sometimes happen, inherited all their mother's talents, and the boy a thousand times more. Although nearly a year

younger than his sister, he very soon proved that he required a better and more profound teacher than his lady mother.

The first symptoms that this discovery was mutual, were his visits to the dressing-room being suffered to become much fewer and shorter than heretofore; and at length Lady Alicia yielded to the truth of an opinion latterly frequently expressed by her husband in these words,—“ My dear, I think it is time I should be looking out for a tutor for that boy:” and a tutor was accordingly procured.

Most providentially, the wisest and fondest parents could not have selected one more desirable in every respect than the individual whom accident threw in the way of these very incompetent and heedless judges. Mr. Mason was at once a profoundly learned, and a most conscientious man.

Although long habits of seclusion in the haunts of a college, joined to a peculiar simplicity of character, had left him as ignorant

of the ways of the world, (the modern world, as he termed it,) as an infant, they had rendered him, perhaps, but the more earnest in the duties he had undertaken to perform. He poured into the delighted ears of his intelligent pupil, not only the erudition of the schools, but liberal, high-minded, and extended principles of right and wrong—such as, falling upon congenial soil, seemed calculated to make the promising youth, in time, a good as well as a great man. They became almost immediately attached to each other in no common degree. The Christian simplicity of the good old man's character, though it never amounted to the ludicrous, was yet sufficient to make him conscious and reserved in the society of strangers ; and because he felt that his own philosophic and high sentiments would not be understood by them, and yet knew no others with which to replace them, he generally remained perfectly silent, and by many was considered stupid, if not ignorant. How delightful was it, then, for him to find, in

the lovely child now committed to his care, one who could not only tolerate his noble peculiarities, but into whom it was at once his duty and delight to instil all his own high aspirings, after the only valuable knowledge,—namely, moral good in its most extended sense !

Of women, Mr. Mason was particularly shy ; not from contempt or dislike, but simply because all he had ever read or heard of them, added to his own experience, (which consisted almost wholly in their exclusion from all seats of learning,) caused him to believe that they could have no feeling in common with him; and if, in his younger days, he had ever entertained other hopes, they were so long gone by, that he felt now as much apart from women, as if they were another order of beings. Indeed, he scarcely expected to be able to make himself intelligible to them, even in the common civilities of the table, and was therefore most agreeably surprised to find Mr. Evelyn's house nearly exempt from their presence ; as, by the

time he became domesticated in it, Lady Alicia had entirely abjured the lower apartments, and took even her meals alone, or in company of her little girl only. Good Mr. Mason's joy on this subject was, however, to be of short duration ; and he himself was destined to be, in part, the innocent and most unconscious cause of an accession to the female society at Beauton !

It so happened, that, since children were first given to their parents' prayers, never did two creatures love each other more fondly than did Herbert Evelyn and his sister Gertrude. They were both amiably disposed, which prevented ill humour—that bane of infantine, and indeed of mature affection ; and being the only children of the family, they were entirely dependent on each other for all their sports and all their happiness. Besides, though both were endowed with more than common intelligence, their talents were of a different order ; and the boy was very soon able to assume his sex's su-

periority over the little girl, by becoming her assistant and her champion, which established another powerful bond of interest on both sides. Under these circumstances, it is not to be supposed that when her brother became emancipated from the dressing-room, Gertrude remained very contentedly behind ; and as Lady Alicia was the least fitted, of all persons in the world, to struggle with or control a lively child, however well disposed to the task, she soon began to overlook her frequent absences, under various excuses to herself of its being good for the child's health, and a pity to deprive the boy altogether of his only companion, she having succeeded in scaring away all visitors from her house. Gertrude was but too delighted to perceive this tacit yielding to her wish for liberty, and she first began to spend the time of her brother's leisure hours in gambols with him ; then advanced to sitting on the window-sill, and watching with wistful eyes until he should be released from his lessons ; and, finally, won

by the mild and gentle countenance of the old man, she ventured into the room, and became almost as much pleased to be near him as near her brother, until at last her visits to the dressing-room became as rare as Herbert's own.

But although Lady Alicia was not unwilling to get rid of the task of teaching a little girl whose mind she had not the happy art of engaging, she soon began to feel the disagreeable vacuum which was caused by her long absence, and once more her thoughts turned entirely upon the subject of her own health. This, with a person who lived so secluded, even from the society of her own family, must soon have ended in absolute insanity ; but, before it had reached such lengths, she came to the determination of procuring some person who, whilst she listened to and sympathised in her lady's tender grievances, as part of her engagement, should at the same time act as a sort of governess or duenna to the little girl ;—that is, she was to see that her hair and dress were properly

attended to, and that she did not break her neck in her pastimes with her brother, when the *gouvernante* was not better employed in reading aloud some 'Guide to Health,' or some fashionable novel, for the relief of Lady Alicia's mental or bodily languor, as the case might be most urgent at the moment.

It may be asked why, in choosing a female companion, Lady Alicia did not endeavour to procure one who, while she was really capable of instructing the beautiful little girl in all that was befitting her sex and age, might, at the same time, have proved a rational and agreeable, if not an improving, companion to herself. Simply for this reason—that Lady Alicia loved her own ease more than anything on earth ; and she had an instinctive feeling, that a well-educated and independent-minded woman would have been a troublesome associate for one so sunk in indolence, and, at the same time, with sense enough still remaining to know that better things should have been expected of her.

She sometimes knew herself to be whimsical, and unreasonable ; but as she intended to continue so, she wished for a companion who would minister to her whims, without making her ashamed of them.

On the cruel injustice to her charming child, she soothed her conscience with the recollection that Gertrude was still so young, and that when she had thus secured a person to look after her in her idle hours, she should herself be better able to attend to her accomplishments and education. Alas ! upon what grounds is it that we build so confidently on being able to resist one temptation, while we are quietly suffering ourselves to be overcome by another ? Are they not all alike, the froward offspring of our passions ; and when we yield to one, will not the others assert their equal right, with a clamour which we are sometimes fain to hush, at a sacrifice we should previously have spurned at, and which had never been heard if the first symptoms of insubordination had been subdued ?

Lady Alicia succeeded in procuring an humble companion, under the name of governess—one as humble and as well fitted for the former, as she was unfitted for the latter task; and finding no immediate ill effect from her first failure in duty to her child, she, as might be expected, felt less reluctance in yielding to the next, and the next; and so the little creature, whom Nature had gifted in no common degree, with beauty of person and intelligence of mind, was suffered to grow, like one of the neglected rose-trees in her mother's flower-garden, wild, luxuriant, and untrained—but sweet, lovely, and graceful notwithstanding.

Her father, from the very hour of his son's birth, gave all the affection that should have been divided between his children entirely to him, partly for the wise reason that he *was* his son and heir, and partly because he was *not* of the sex of his lady mother; which sex Mr. Evelyn had latterly begun to think a very troublesome part of the creation. By him,

therefore, even when his field sports, or domestic annoyances, did not call or drive him from his home, she passed totally unnoticed. Her brother, indeed, more than once mentioned his sister's capabilities, and the little cultivation they received; and Mr. Mason even found him occasionally giving her lessons himself: but if for a moment this caused the good man to fix his mild contemplative eyes upon her, as if to ask if she could be an exception to her sex, and really capable of literary acquirement, some idle freak or lively sally of the animated little girl crushed the extravagant hope in the bud, and he would turn away with a smile and a sigh, pleased that his pupil had so innocent, and to himself so improving, an occupation for his leisure hours, but grieved that it must prove so useless, where he expected it to be so beneficial. Yet, once more, let it not for a moment be supposed that Mr. Mason despised or held women in contempt: besides that he was much too mild and gentle for such a feeling, he merely

looked on them as he did on the flowers of the field or birds of the air—a beautiful species in their own nature, but of which he understood as little, and therefore left them to themselves.

It must be confessed that circumstances were still most unfavourable to the good man's recovery from his delusion upon this subject. Had he even known of Lady Alicia's talents, (latent as they may well be called,) the knowledge would have been attended with no other consequence than to make him suppose her a *lusus naturæ*, and, like all such, but the more useless and repulsive, as a heterogeneous mixture of different natures, instead of the perfection of some one, even of a lower scale in the creation. And for Miss Wilson, the *gouvernante*, if ever there was a being formed expressly to sanction and confirm his preconceived ideas, she was that one—not that she was an idiot; if she had been, he should have heard her spoken of as such, and gathered that such was not the common state of woman-

hood : she was only an automaton—an eating, drinking, sleeping, walking machine. He was not at all sure that her powers amounted to speaking, and should certainly have doubted the fact, but that he recollected to have heard his pupil more than once say that she was reading to his mamma in her dressing-room—and *his* word he could not doubt. Still, reading, albeit a wonder of another kind, did not involve a power of forming a sentence herself ; and this he was obliged merely to infer from some nearly inarticulate sounds that escaped her at dinner, eked out by odd nods and wriggles, when addressed on the subject of her food,—and farther than this no one seemed inclined to venture. It was enough, however, to prove that she was not dumb. And when Mr. Mason saw others do so, he was of course obliged to accept her as a specimen of the sex. Still, that she was not a pleasing one, some instinctive feeling told him ; and he kept quietly but tenaciously aloof from her, as something more inexplicable to him than all

the rest, with nothing to redeem her cold stupidity. Hate any one he could not, much less one so inoffensive ; but he always felt out of his element if any accident disturbed his regular system, and brought him more within the sphere of her attraction, or—repulsion.

But what, perhaps, was stranger still, there were not wanting those who believed the duenna to be shrewd and sensible ; others, deep and designing ; just according to their own class and order of intellect : and all this merely because she was silent, quiet, and unobtrusive ; and that it was even less odd to believe her clever, in spite of all appearances to the contrary, than to suppose that an humble companion could really be what she seemed to be, and no more ! She was, nevertheless, simply what she seemed to be—quiet, unobtrusive, and unobservant, with just enough of animal instinct remaining to know and feel herself comfortably situated, and therefore to take care to be in nobody's way, to interfere with nobody's incom-

ings or outgoings ; in short, to make herself secure of the permanence of her present abode, on the same principle as a chair or a sofa might be, in a quiet family.

I believe it is maintained by some, that we are all composed originally of the same elements, and even in exactly the same proportions ; and that it is only as external circumstances act upon our sensitive and plastic organization, that different characters are formed, according to the particular passions, powers, or talents, which, either by judicious education, or casual circumstances, are called into exercise and strengthened, whilst others are suffered to lie dormant, until finally they become to all practical purposes extinct. In this view of things, Miss Wilson might have been originally intended by nature to be more of a human being than she now appeared to be ; but in early life she was so cuffed and buffeted about, by low unprincipled parents, for appearing to understand what they did not choose that she should understand,

yet talked of openly before her, that whatever little degree of intellect she had been born with was barely sufficient to enable her to conceal it !

When death removed her parents, she was given her morsel in the house of a petty village schoolmistress, a distant relation of her own, and taught to read and write, (by dint of strokes of more kind than one,) in order that she might in time assist in teaching the other children. In this situation she still found it so inconvenient and so *unlucky* to see what she should not see, and to hear what she should not hear, that, as she had not sufficient energy to seize the opportunities afforded her of becoming a rogue,—or, in other words, not having talent enough at once to exercise and conceal them,—she adopted the much less difficult task of stifling them ; and, by a little determination and good management, she was enabled soon to render them so completely latent, that even she herself lost sight of them entirely, and soon forgot that they had

ever existed ; and by the time that a chance circumstance threw her in the way of Lady Alicia Evelyn, she was as completely passive a machine to be acted upon by the will of others, as any toady ever professed to be, but so seldom is.

Only one circumstance during the whole course of the first seven years she had vegetated at Beanton Park ever afforded the least surmise of her having even a negative will or wish of her own ; and it must be confessed that the occasion was sufficiently extraordinary ;—so much so, that previous to making the necessary claim on the reader's confidence in our veracity, it is necessary to inform him, that Miss Wilson, with all her mental deficiencies, possessed the usual complement of limbs and features ; the first duly formed the second tolerably fair, but so dead, so inanimate, so devoid of all that could inspire love from the very hope of reciprocity of feeling, that she was still Miss Wilson at some undefinable age between forty and fifty. Still,

she could never be called plain ; and stranger still, she was not essentially vulgar—that is, she was not a vulgar toady. It is not often that a very dull, very silent, perfectly undesigning and quietly self-possessed person, satisfied with their own position, will appear absolutely vulgar. It is your sensitive, aspiring, lively, anxious—ay, and clever people, who are either vulgar or—odd ; people with exquisite ears, who catch up every rich brogue and expressive intonation around them—in short, who feel themselves above their seeming, and are nervously jealous of not being recognised by others to be so. But this is only when untoward circumstances have conspired to deprive them of their natural birthright ; namely, elegance, high breeding,—manners polished as their minds, because emanating from and regulated by them ; suavity, which accommodates itself to all, because conscious that few can accommodate themselves to it ;—in short, that moral dignity which, when suffered to expand itself in congenial atmo-

spheres, acknowledges no rules but what are born of itself; and which smiles on the superficial and studied observance of conventional rules by others, as it would on the gambols of the child, who, mounted on its wooden hobby-horse, believes, because it has learned by rote all the technical expressions and attitudes appertaining to horsemanship, that it has also acquired the true spirit of the thing.

This is an inheritance to which dulness, though it may escape vulgarity, never can succeed, consigned for ever to insipid mediocrity. And hence it is, that while the cold and mediocre character, though by constant friction smoothed down to a convenient level of deportment, will on any sudden excitement or fermentation betray its inherent dross; inborn elegance, though overshadowed and obscured, will, when excited beyond the outward seeming, break out into such bright and sparkling emanations, as does the pure crystal spring when anything disturbs the scum that may have rested

on its surface. This insipid mediocrity, however, was precisely the sort of mind or manner best suited to one in Miss Wilson's situation ; and so well did it carry her through her present routine of life, that it began to be observed, that a gouty old fox-hunter, whom Mr. Evelyn occasionally invited to his house with other gentlemen of the neighbourhood, looked upon her with a degree of complacency, if not of interest, which seemed to say: "Gad ! I think she would make an excellent wife for a rich old fellow, who wants some one to nurse him when that d—d gout attacks him : she is so silent, and slips about so quietly." The thing was almost incredible, but so it was ; and other unequivocal and not less wonderful symptoms began in time to manifest themselves.

It may be thought strange how a courtship, or even a flirtation, with Miss Wilson, who never spoke, even on her fingers, or seemed to understand when others spoke, (thanks to her early education,) could be carried on, much

less observed, or, as the saying is, "get wind;" but everything in this world is by comparison.

Miss Wilson was one of that class of beings who are allowed to take the trouble both of making tea, and of handing it about to the company. Now, as the eye long accustomed to any one object, or even to vacancy, although it may be unconscious of its own perception, will notice any sudden change in the object or the space; so it was observed one evening, that Miss Wilson's chair was more constantly occupied by its fair tenant than was usual with her during tea-time, although she seemed to be indulging in an odd sort of exercise, of perpetually rising and sitting down again, without ever leaving her place. It was examined into, and found to be owing to the alertness of the old gentleman, who, according as she filled the cups, hobbled forward to receive them from her hand and distribute them; to which she submitted with the apparent nonchalance of a high-bred lady, accustomed to receive such attentions

as her right—if high-bred ladies could by any accident be placed in such a situation, but which, in her, proceeded from that passive quiescence, which yielded to whatever seemed to be the will of others. At first this Quixotic gallantry only excited a laugh, in which the cunning old beau himself affected to join ; but when he proceeded to sitting next to her at dinner, heaping choice fruits upon her plate, and deserting the bottle once or twice to follow her to the drawing-room, people began to stare upon each other, and to shake their heads.

At last the climax came : he pursued her one evening into the shrubbery ; what passed there no one ever exactly knew ; but the old tutor, who, in taking his evening stroll, happened to encounter them, was observed to look back several times with an expression of more astonishment than his placid countenance had ever before exhibited, as if to satisfy himself that either his eyes or ears had not played him false,

and was even heard to mutter, "God preserve me ! a love-talk with her !"

This, together with a sudden change in the attentions of the gentleman, which evidently "drooped from that hour," left but little room to doubt that he had popped the question, and been—refused. It was not, however, observed that he broke his heart ; and when quizzed and questioned upon the subject, he never made other answer than, "Gad ! she's a most extraordinary woman !" with a look, and a sort of shrug, and dubious smile, which showed that he was, now at least, as much astonished himself at what had taken place, either upon her part or his own, as any of his friends could be ; and he was quite willing to leave it amongst them, to be discussed, and inquired into, if any light could be thrown upon the matter.

The lady, in the mean while, answered all raillery upon the subject with a quiet and unmeaning extension of her thin lips, which leaves

it, to this day, a matter of doubt whether her refusal proceeded from her not having understood, until it was too late, the honour that was intended for her—from her being too wise to relinquish the elegant comforts of Beauton Park for a sick room—or from her being too passive to take the trouble the change of position would necessarily entail upon her. But so the matter ended for the present, although not so its effects upon her odd machinery.

Such was the person who acted, or who was called on to act, as the governess of Miss Evelyn. From her, indeed, the young lady could learn no evil,—but what of good? Of the advantages which, notwithstanding so much was neglected, she still could not fail to derive from her refined and elegant, though selfish and indolent mother, she was also deprived before she had quite attained her fourteenth year. Lady Alicia at last fell a victim to her own valetudinarian habits, and left her lovely girl at that tender age without a friend, or almost an

acquaintance, upon earth, save those who composed her father's household. How far they were suited to superintend the developement of her mind and character, the reader may himself imagine.

One or two of Lady Alicia's nearest relatives did indeed, when the melancholy event was made known to them, offer to look out for a fashionable seminary for the young lady, and to superintend her education there ; but as Mr. Evelyn thought he had seen but too much of the effects of a fashionable education in her mother, and yet, with characteristic inconsistency, could not conceive what more could be requisite for her, than to continue the governess whom that mother had selected, he peremptorily refused to allow of their interference ; and so alienated from his innocent and beautiful child the very few even nominal friends whom her mother's whims and pride had left to her.

CHAPTER III.

And both were young, and one was beautiful :
And both were young, yet not alike in youth.
As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge,
The maid was on the eve of womanhood ;
The boy had fewer summers, but his heart
Had far outgrown his years.

BYRON.

Most happily for Gertrude, under all the disadvantages of her position, her brother and she continued to love each other with an affection, that indeed "grew with their growth, and strengthened with their strength." The years that had passed over them, while they left Gertrude the amiable, enthusiastic, lovely, and loving being which she had come from the hand of Nature, had mellowed and blended down every

exuberance, and called out every talent and every virtue in Herbert's mind and character, under the judicious culture of his excellent friend and tutor; so that he became, even at his early age, everything that sanguine friend could have wished. His intellect was precocious, as were his feelings; and this enabled him, though younger than his sister, to preserve an influence over her, which evinced itself in endeavours to impart to her some of that information which he had himself acquired. While she, quick, lively, and happy, with that dislike of application, the constant attendant upon a certain kind of talent, which refuses to acknowledge its necessity, would, except from very fondness for her brother, and unwillingness to disoblige him, have gladly dispensed with any information beyond that supplied by her own vivid imagination, quick perception, and sympathetic feelings. It was beautiful to see the boy, whose manly form had already far outstripped his sister's in height and strength, remembering his own fewer sum-

mers, yet, in the consciousness of his superior mental advantages, gently endeavouring to coax the playful girl into attention to her task, which she too frequently evaded by a bound from the glass door of the summer sitting-room, down the flowery slope on which it opened, with a promise from its base, that if he found her amongst the various paths to which it led, she would pay the penalty of more attention. Sometimes on these occasions the boy, smiling and shaking his head at her in despair, would turn away to his own amusements or avocations; but more frequently, the spirits of his own age, as well as hers, would overcome him, and he would bound after her, and chase her until the task was forgotten by them both.

It might have been after one of these chases, and about two years after the death of Lady Alicia, that, in such a lovely evening, as we have attempted to portray in the opening of the story, the brother and sister sauntered along one of the romantic dark walks of Beauton Park.

They were such a pair as seemed purposely formed to rove in such a scene, and such an hour. They were at this time both strikingly beautiful ; and were moving together in the very attitude in which the picture represented them ; his arm twined fondly round her neck, while hers circled his waist. He was now a tall, slender, and graceful youth, and her bright and beautiful cheek rested as gently on his shoulder, as the movement of a very slow stroll permitted.

“ Our lessons are at an end for ever now, Gertrude,” said young Evelyn, as his sister and he paced along.

“ Why, dearest Herbert ?” she quickly asked ; but a hasty blush that succeeded to the question, showed that she had made a better guess at his meaning than she cared to own.

“ Oh ! because—why, for various reasons : in the first place, because you are grown as inattentive as if—really, as if you were *in love* ; and,

in the next place, because Major Vandeleur is in love with you !”

“ In love with me ! how ridiculous, Herbert !” But the sweet uncontrollable twitter about her lovely little plump mouth, the delighted though shy glance of her bright, bird-like eye, and the now deepened blush on her round and almost infantine cheek, all plainly told that the news was neither strange nor disagreeable to her.

“ Ay, *in love* with you, Gertrude, all wonderful as his taste must be ;” (and they exchanged sweet and affectionate smiles ;) “ and what is more to us, you are *in love* with him, my sister, and I am quite sure you will be married to him.”

“ Nay, that at all events can never be,” said she ingenuously ; “ for I have heard Major Vandeleur say several times to papa that he was but a soldier of fortune—which, you know, means a soldier without any fortune ; and though mine will be large, I have often heard poor mamma say, it was only enough to entitle

me to a larger: not to supply the place of both."

"You are wonderfully provident, Gertrude!" exclaimed her brother, looking at her with some surprise. "I begin to think you are *not* in love with Vandeleur after all."

Another bright shy glance from eyes instantly averted, and cast on the ground, with a speaking though unconscious smile, told even to the youthful brother, far better than words could have done, not only that his first conjecture was the right one, but that she would gladly share, not her large fortune alone, but her last crust of bread, with the man they spoke of; and that in calculating as she did, it was only in anxious anticipation of the objections that might be urged by others against her marrying him. He knew well the human heart who said,

"Who fondly loves must greatly fear."

Her brother gazed for a moment on her downcast face with a tenderness of feeling that

might have become a father; then twining his arm more closely round her neck, he said :

“ That shall be no impediment, Gertrude. I love Vandeleur myself, and papa and every one seems to like him ; and if want of money be the only objection to your marrying him, you know I must hereafter inherit every shilling of my father’s large fortune, except what you receive as the settlement for younger children, and I can easily prevail on him to make over a part of it to you and Vandeleur immediately.”

Gertrude was herself too generous, too unspoiled by the cold and artificial world—why must we say—*too young* ? to see anything novel or objectionable in this proposal, and only answered it by raising her bright smiling face to his.

“ Then it is to be, Gertrude ? ” he asked in a tone of fond, and almost pensive interrogation : “ what shall I do for my playmate and dear pupil ? ”

“Herbert, I will not leave you! I will never leave you for any one!” she exclaimed, suddenly throwing herself into his arms, while her eyes filled with tears.

“Nay, my own Gertrude, this is childish; I did but jest. You know I am going almost immediately to college; and wherever you and Vandeleur may settle, I can always come to you. But, Gertrude, it is time to ask, has Vandeleur spoken to you on the subject yet?”

“Why, not absolutely; but still I think I can see that it is in his head.”

“And I can see that you are in his heart; so when these two are agreed, it is pretty plain what will follow—you know the hand lies between them.”

“I have so longed to talk to you about it, Herbert, but feared you would laugh at me.”

“And did you think, Gertrude, that Lady Augusta Starling would feel more seriously on the subject?”

“Lady Augusta Starling!—no. I have been obliged to take hers and her father’s raillery in good part; but I have never spoken to her seriously upon the subject.”

“Have you not indeed? Then, my sweet sister, the sooner you make a merit of a necessity the better; for when she commences her raillery, you always look so conscious, and so beseechingly for mercy, that I assure you I supposed you had made an acknowledged confidant of her, and felt not a little jealous.”

“Dearest Herbert, could you believe that you should not be my first and only confidant? Besides, I have really known Lady Augusta so short a time.”

“Yes, but she is a fine and intelligent girl. Our mothers once visited; but since the death of both, and Lady Augusta being sent to London to be educated, there has been no way of keeping up the intimacy, except when my father happens to bring good old Lord Foxhill home to dinner, when he meets him out hunt-

ing. But now that Lady Augusta is returned, I dare say they will see company, and be a great acquisition to you, as they are such near neighbours. She seems to like you more than you do her."

"Not more indeed, Herbert. I think her very lively and agreeable, and like her very much, so far : it was only when you spoke of her and yourself together, that one liking was lost sight of in the other."

"Well, I am glad to hear it ; for if a certain affair proceeds, I do not know whom else you have to look to, for all the pretty little offices necessary on those occasions ; as I do not think our good Miss Wilson would be exactly suited to be one of Cupid's emissaries or assistants, or even of old Hymen's."

"Nay, now, Herbert, you are quizzing me after all. But, do you know, seriously, I think Miss Wilson has been odd of late."

"How do you mean *odd* ? or how *of late* ? for if there is any change, it must be to become

less odd. *Pour l'amour*, what do you mean? By the bye, I shall use that form of entreaty to you in future, my fair lady, as the most appropriate. So, *pour l'amour*, tell me what you mean about Miss Wilson."

Gertrude was obliged to recover herself from a fit of laughing at her own thoughts, ere she was able to answer, "You will think me jealous if I tell you, that since Major Vandeleur has been in the habit of coming here so often, I observe a change in her manners and deportment altogether. Well, Herbert—you make no exclamation of surprise? no reply?"

"I am waiting to understand you—to get even a glimpse at what your meaning can be."

"Well, then, I do assure you I *have* observed what I say. She is become much more attentive to her appearance, and looks much more alive, than heretofore; and, I think, even speaks, or at least nods, more than usual."

"Well, granting it is so, what do you infer from all this?"

"Nay, what would *you* infer from it?" [laughing.]—"I tell you the change has taken place since Major Vandeleur's frequenting our drawing-room."

"Shall I tell you what I infer from it, Gertrude?"

"Certainly."

"That you are realizing all I have ever heard, but never before believed, of love not only blinding the eyes, but turning the brain."

"Nay, but, my Herbert, it has only opened my eyes, it seems."

"But if you must fulfil all the prescribed rules of an inamorata, and as, I confess, you had not many to choose amongst here, why did you not select Lady Augusta as a more worthy object of jealousy?"

"In the first place, because, though the change I speak of in Miss Wilson is as strange as true, still I absolutely am *not* jealous!—and in the next place, because if I did want an object on whom to practise such prettinesses,

Lady Augusta could not be the one, as Major Vandeleur and she are old friends; and you know old friends never become new lovers."

"Where were they acquainted?"

"In London, two years ago. They met at Lord Hampton's, where his mother lives, and where Lady Augusta is always received very kindly, as her father and the late marchioness were related. She says Major Vandeleur was exceedingly admired in London in the first circles, but that he vanished off the scene from that time.—But, Herbert," she continued, bashfully and almost pleadingly, "tell me, do you really think that if—mind, I say *if*—Major Vandeleur should wish it, papa will give his consent?"

"Not unless Vandeleur asks it, most assuredly, however much he may wish it."

"Unkind Herbert! why are you so teasing?"

"To make you speak candidly and simply out at once, Gertrude." Then, throwing his arms fondly round her, and kissing her forehead,

he hastily added : “ I do—I do think he will—must give his consent, my own dear Gertrude, if it will make you happy.”

“ Nay, you know I am *so* happy already ; though I confess that now—I think—I believe,—Herbert, you are laughing at me !”

“ I am not, love ; I am only laughing at your hesitation to acknowledge what we all know so well.”

“ What !—what do you all know ?” she exclaimed, startled and blushing :—“ not that I wish to leave home ?”

“ No, no,” said her brother, smiling ; “ only whatever you were about to acknowledge yourself, when my unlucky smile arrested it on your lips.”

“ I was only going to confess, that I should now certainly miss Vandeleur’s society very much.”

“ Well, you shall *not* miss it, my dearest sister. He is a fine, noble-looking fellow, and seems very pleasing and amiable : the only possible

objection I can think of is, that, if we understood him rightly, his mother is governess, or companion, or something of that sort, in some nobleman's family;—I hope she's not like Miss Wilson!"

"You may be satisfied, then, that she is not; for Lady Augusta told me all about it, and it is quite a particular case: it is in the Marquis of Hampton's family. He had but one daughter, to whom Mrs. Vandeleur went rather as a second mother, when the marchioness died, than as a governess: she continued with her always, and moved in the first circles with her. The young lady is now married, and Mrs. Vandeleur continues to reside with her, and is held in the highest respect and estimation."

"Oh! this does indeed seem a distinct business from a mere common governess. But I wonder, then, why Vandeleur thought it necessary to bring it out as he did,—for it certainly seemed to me to be done for the express purpose of giving us information which he seemed

to apprehend might not be pleasing; and it was at the same time that he spoke of himself being a soldier of fortune. He took the opportunity, too, when only papa, you and I, and Mr. Mason were present, as if to spare Miss Wilson—and he certainly coloured when he mentioned it: all this looked as if he himself felt it a degradation.”

“ He looked as if he was what he is, the noblest and most upright of men! How well I know why he mentioned it all in that way!—not only that we might know the worst that any one could think of it, but that we might find it so much better in reality than he represented it.”

“ Well, that was a little Quixotic, too: how will he look if he has given my father a prejudice he cannot remove?”

“ You don’t think he has, Herbert? I do assure you, I have not exaggerated in the least Lady Augusta’s account of it; she even said that they were known to be people of good con-

nexions ; and you know Lady Augusta, though not, I think, exquisitely high bred herself, has been lately in very high society in London."

"She has, I believe, and is a very good and shrewd judge in these matters ; and, happily for you, I don't think my father cares a fig for them ; and I know he will have confidence enough in me to make a considerable addition to your fortune."

An affectionate kiss from Gertrude expressed at once her happiness and thanks ; and they were proceeding homewards, now perfectly silent, lost in their own sweet thoughts, and innocent plans for a continuance of happiness, which had never yet experienced a cloud ; and probably offering up the incense of their young hearts' gratitude for their being so favoured amongst men, when Gertrude, perhaps from that very reflection, suddenly exclaimed —

"Oh ! Herbert ! did you remember to ride over to read to the poor old dying woman who

begged to see you as the clergyman was absent?"

"No; indeed I am ashamed to say I did not, and I do not deserve the happiness I enjoy; but I shall yet have time this lovely evening, while you and Vandeleur row about the lake, and I think my father must have released him from the dining-room before now; so, good-b'ye."

"Good-b'ye, dearest, dearest brother! but if you knew how dreadfully the thought of leaving you takes from my happiness in the prospect before me!"

"Silly girl! you will not leave me. Great haste as you are in, very possibly it is I who shall leave you, to enter college. You are not married yet, remember, for all our wise saws." And away he flew.

How had Major Vandeleur been employed while his fate was thus settled by his two youthful and innocent admirers?

For some time he was detained by Mr. Evelyn

in the dining-room ; but as he was not anxious to render himself particularly agreeable this lovely evening within doors, in a room heated with the fumes of dinner and of wine, when he guessed that the lady of his love was enjoying far different perfumes without, he was soon released. Failing however in tracing her steps amidst the intricacies of Beanton, he retired to the summer sitting-room, which by custom had become almost exclusively sacred to Gertrude and Herbert, and there sat down to console himself for their absence by writing a letter to his mother, which we shall take the liberty of presenting to our readers.

Letter from Major Vandeleur to his Mother.

“ MY DEAR MOTHER ;

“ Many thanks for your kind letter and present, or letter and kind present, I care not which way you place the adjective, for I assure you one was as acceptable to me as the other. I plead guilty to your charge of having been a

remiss correspondent of late ; but I am about to make amends for it now, by so long a letter as, if I had not the privilege of enclosing to your noble friend, would try, I think, even your patience, all interesting as I know the subject will prove to you. I told you in my last how much I liked my present quarters, and chiefly in consequence of two very agreeable families, that of old Lord Foxhill and of Mr. Evelyn ; and when I told you that Lord Foxhill's daughter, Lady Augusta Starling, lively and beautiful, and witty and musical, and well-dowered, was at her father's old mansion here, you threw out some gentle insinuations. But, my mother, did I not tell you at the same time, that Gertrude Evelyn, though neither witty, musical, or an heiress, was the sweetest and most fascinating creature, without my being exactly able to say why, that I ever beheld—almost—(but let that pass). You say I did not mention this ! Well, hear it from me now, my mother. She is not yet quite sixteen,

but she really is the most delightful mixture of childishness, and woman's best feelings, that ever laid siege to a poor soldier's heart. In one thing she can compare with Lady Augusta even in verbal description—she is quite beautiful. You remember when our friend Lord D—— was first presented to the beautiful daughter of General G——, his exclamation in his own odd way of, ‘Blue eyes and black hair, how interesting!’ Add to this a very fair, and particularly soft and beautiful skin, and you will have the same odd jumble of beauties united in her person, as is in her character; and the result is the same too—‘love and loveliness.’ She is *petite*, but exquisite. With a voice like a cherub, or, if that is a far-fetched simile, like Joy whispering its own sweet secrets! she is too airy to suffer it or her fingers to be broke into order. Luckily her laugh is music in itself, and does not require as much entreaty to bring it forth, as the more artificial music of other ladies. She is fond of painting,

and has done some pretty things. She rides—I was going to say like an angel, but that might imply by the aid of wings; and you, being a very learned lady, might fancy I meant on Pegasus; of which, to say truth, she is as guiltless as any unlettered soldier could wish his wife to be. No; to speak seriously, her education, as it is technically called, has been rather neglected; though the refinement of her late mother's mind and manners, which is universally admitted, has given a polish to her children, which is even striking already; whilst her secluded, and valedudinarian habits, left Gertrude without a companion except her brother; to which, I suppose, may be attributed her blooming health and artless simplicity. But then, to make amends for the want of a systematic education, she has sweetness, amiability, vivacity, and a degree of cleverness, that not only shows she would be an apt scholar, but which could not fail to interest a man of taste and feeling; in neither of which, I trust, is your poor son wholly deficient. Then

her brother, who, though a year younger, is already a perfect gentleman, and an enlightened companion, has taught her all that she would consent to learn from him ; but he complains sadly of her idleness. They are devotedly attached to each other, and really are a charming and beautiful pair. Mr. Evelyn himself is a good-humoured, hospitable sportsman ; but so utterly unfit to be father to Gertrude—at least to be her sole protector, that I think he would not be very fastidious in the choice of a husband for her, simply to free himself from the responsibility of taking care of what he has some vague idea is a treasure ; just as a clown might have of one of Raphael's Madonnas—he neither knows or loves her as he ought. Add to these personages a most classical specimen of a tutor : really one of the most genuinely good, and learned men, it has ever been my lot to meet with ; and who, odd as it may seem, has taken a great fancy to me—indeed, I am the only one, except Herbert Evelyn, whom he ever volunteers to

address. Nay, now it is odd, mother, notwithstanding your partiality, and my own self-love. For, whatever modest laurels I may have gained as a schoolboy, they have been long crushed down under my heavy helmet, till I fear not a leaf of them remains. One more addition, and you have the household of Mr. Evelyn complete, and even some of the furniture; for certainly little better than a sweeping-brush dressed up in petticoats, is a thing who is here by way of keeping Miss Evelyn in countenance in this bachelor's house. I have never yet heard the sound of her voice by any accident; but when I insisted to Miss E. that she must be dumb, she assured me that she was not; that when first she came, she used to answer at dinner,—but that now she has so broken them into her ‘nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,’ (ye gods! what a smile it is!) that she is enabled to dispense with words altogether! Miss Evelyn is pleased to say that I see her to particular advantage; that she

dresses much better, and her signs are much more frequent, since my arrival—dear soul ! But you will wonder to what all this long history is tending — will you, my mother ? Well, it is tending, or intended at least, to make you intimately acquainted with a family, with whom it would be the pride, and happiness, of my existence, to become connected, through the lovely daughter. Young men in general make choice of each other to become the depositaries of such secrets as this ; but, besides that some passages of my past life, too sacred even for friendship's ear, have necessarily fallen under your eye, and thereby formed a more than common bond between us—besides this, I have never much relished committing these little matters to masculine sympathies. Hear me then, my mother : I love Gertrude Evelyn as I never thought I should have loved woman again—Again, did I say ? nay, it is as unlike what has passed by as a dream in a former state of existence—as if the two feelings did not come under the same denomi-

nation. And it is much better that it should be so : had it been at all of the same kind, it never could have equalled it, in respect, devotion—I had nearly said worship. But now it is a species in itself, new and delicious : I love her as an angelic child ; I adore her as a lovely woman ; who, by re-wakening feelings that I thought had slept for ever, has already restored me to happiness. It is true, she is some ten or twelve years younger than I am ; but what of that ? she is *so* young that it does not make me an old man ; and in good faith, if I can win her, I think I shall make her as good a guardian as her father does. Nor do I think the little angel is wholly unconscious of my passion : she blushes at my approach, and I have sometimes thought I detected a bright glance exchanged between her and her brother, when any little confusion or blundering at table, or elsewhere, has obliged me to make any marked effort to get near her ; nor has the glance been an unjoyous one, and seldom unaccompanied by an irrepressible

smile on that loveliest and most ingenuous of mouths; while the gentlemanly and more cautious youth, generally, in endeavouring to avert, is sure to confirm my suspicions, by a deep blush, and an effort to look grave. Cannot you fancy them very charming and interesting? If I should be so blest as to win Gertrude, I really think half—no, perhaps not so much—but a great deal of my happiness will consist in becoming elder brother to him. I have formed a sincere, and serious friendship for, and with him, far beyond what, without knowing him, you could suppose possible with one of his age. But, after all, what pretensions have I to such a girl as Miss Evelyn? This sometimes presses heavily on my consideration. The small, very small inheritance which your generosity and maternal affection induced you to leave for me, unburthened even by your own support, when I was too young to understand the sacrifice you made, until you had become too much attached to, and too much beloved by your angelic pupil,

to think of parting from her ; this trifling inheritance, and my pay as major of dragoons, not only does not entitle me to aspire to a young lady of Miss Evelyn's handsome—nay, very large fortune, not to mention any other considerations,—but scarcely, I fear, sets me above the suspicion of very great presumption. From the charge of mercenary views, indeed, the best safeguard is in her charming self. Mr. Evelyn's large property is strictly entailed upon his son, and failing him, upon his daughter ; and, although *I* can safely assert that I should rather have himself as a brother, both for Gertrude's dear sake and my own, than have his fortune by his death, still this entail renders her right (in Smithfield language) to a noble match, all the stronger : however, we shall see. Her father seems to me not to value her half enough—and perhaps poor somebody's chance is all the better for that.—But I must break off, for I see her just coming up towards the house, from a walk on which she mischievously set out with

her brother, before I could make my escape from the dining-room ; and as he is not returned with her, I must go in civility and escort her. No, my mother, no disguise with you—*I cannot stay away from her*. However, as I sleep here to-night, I shall finish my letter in the morning ; and perhaps,—*perhaps*, for she does look so beautiful this moment, carolling along the walk without shawl or bonnet.—

“ My mother ! it is true ! it is as my soul whispered me ! My sweet, my lovely, my angelic girl loves me, with a depth and fervour, which I now perceive I did not dare to anticipate from her years. Her father has accepted me, and I am the very happiest fellow that treads this beautiful and happy earth. I would go through particulars for you if I could ; but I cannot. She looked so lovely and so conscious, when I joined her the evening before last, when I threw by my letter, that I know not how it was, in questioning that consciousness, that I was emboldened to plead my own cause.

Yesterday everything was settled between Mr. Evelyn and me : he certainly is off-handed and liberal enough. Dear Herbert is nearly as happy as I am, though pensive on it, instead of gay. His wedding present, by his father's consent, is a lieutenant-colonelcy for me ; and they are to give Gertrude a few thousands extra for her wedding-clothes, carriages, &c. &c. so we shall do extremely well : at all events, we are, and *will* be extremely happy. Congratulate me, my mother, and, in good old phrase, give me your blessing. I even made my confession, and told my dear, dear Gertrude, that though now my only, she was not my first love : she fixed her dear eyes on me with a kind of childish disappointment for a moment, but was soon perfectly reassured, and accepted my candour instead.—Now, am I not dutiful to write so much to you at such a time ? Ah ! but who wept with me in other times ?—she who will now, I trust, rejoice with me.—Gertrude has not yet made her appearance this morning ; which is an

unusual thing, as it is past her hour, and a morning bright as our prospects. I think I hear her light step now.—Adieu, my dear mother ; God ever bless you !

“ Your affectionate son,

“ GODFREY VANDELEUR.

“ P.S.—It is not she, after all. I wonder what makes her so unusually late. You remember my servant Whitecross ; his wife is maid to Lady Augusta Starling, and when she came here with Lady Augusta, she set up such a romance about me through the house, that it really became quite disagreeable ; as, for her worthy husband’s sake, I did not care to enter into the particulars of that bygone story. She certainly is a grateful creature, but rather obstreperous in her gratitude.—Adieu ! I hear Gertrude now. I shall see you soon, for I must run up to town previous to——. *Addio, cara !*”

From the moment of this auspicious proposal nothing could exceed the happiness at Beanton

Park. Mr. Evelyn, at all times jovial and good-humoured, felt now not only as if a weight, a care, a responsibility, had been removed from his shoulders, but as if he himself must in some way have deserved credit for his only daughter's being so soon, and so eligibly settled in life; and in this complex feeling of relief, and self-gratulation, he grew fonder of Gertrude than he had ever been before. Herbert's love could know no increase; but a kind of tender respect towards the young bride, the chosen of Major Vandeleur, began now to mingle with it, and the effect was delightful. Mr. Mason became sincerely interested in hers and Major Vandeleur's happiness; and such was the diffusive nature of this general good-will, that even impassive Miss Wilson did not wholly escape the infection. In her, however, it was manifested in a manner peculiar to herself, and such as served to show, that if Gertrude was mistaken in the cause she affected to assign for the change in her Duenna's deportment, it was neverthe-

less more dependant on the time and circumstance of Major Vandeleur's arrival, than she herself had ventured to imagine.

The establishment at Beauton, though on a very liberal scale, was not, as may be imagined, conducted with the elegance or propriety of a nobleman's house in London, or even of that of a man of half Mr. Evelyn's fortune, in the present improved state of society. For instance, if a servant was unexpectedly dismissed for some misdemeanour, Mr. Evelyn would never think of replacing him until, perhaps, some day when more persons than usual were expected to dinner, Gertrude or Herbert might observe to him, that there were not servants enough to attend at table; and then his answer would be — "Oh, d—— it! then let John the undergroom, or Tom the helper, slip on that fellow's livery and come in: I suppose they can carry a plate from one to another? I must certainly inquire for a servant to-morrow." The consequence was, that many little *gaucheries* and

vexations *contretemps* occurred from time to time, from which he would have been glad to purchase exemption at double the man's wages, when it was no longer possible.

It was upon one of these occasions that Miss Wilson did more towards proving the truth of the metaphysical doctrine, of all being alike in all, already alluded to, in describing her character, or—want of it, than all that has ever been conjectured upon the subject. It was one of her distinguishing traits—indeed almost necessarily so, to be remarkably indifferent about her dress. Not that she was offensively slovenly, but only seemed to escape from that by some odd chance, or habit, impressed upon her in some lucky moment. And here again her inertia stood her friend; for the one decent dark dress, which had first been prescribed for her, she invariably replaced, when it seemed to threaten a change, by another critically the same. Of late, however, as Miss Evelyn had remarked, the dark gown was sometimes superseded by a pale and

faded lilac silk, which might have had its birth in the days of good Queen Bess ; and on the occasion above alluded to, when a few more gentlemen than usual were to dine at Beanton, not only did she make her appearance in this gothic piece of finery, but an additional bow of ribbon upon her cap, left no doubt upon the minds of any, but that Miss Wilson intended to act the *belle*. Major Vandeleur, albeit he had other occupation for his eyes just then, could not, as she placed herself opposite to him at dinner, fail to observe her grotesque appearance, and whispered to Gertrude, as he took his place beside her—

“ You must now tax your mischievous ingenuity to find out some other reason for all this finery, than a design on *me* ; for, unless she means to carry me off *vi et armis*, she must have given up all hopes since Thursday. But changed she certainly is ; even I myself can now perceive it. Do look, Gertrude, how she ogles about ! What can be the meaning of it ? Is the old bachelor you told me of at dinner to-day ? ”

“ No, nonsense ! he has been at Bath for his health since before you came to the country ; and positively it is since you came, that she has grown so very ridiculous ! ”

Vandeleur laughed, as he always did when Gertrude, with evident seriousness, dated Miss Wilson’s altered eye from this period. “ Can it be rejoicing over your happy prospects ? ” he asked in the same tone of playful raillery.

“ I do not know, but the effect is most melancholy : it really makes me uneasy ; I am sometimes afraid she is going mad.”

“ You need not ; and if she were, her madness is more amusing than her idiocy. But take my word for it, that there is something besides madness here : the disease is of the heart, and not of the head.”

“ What can you possibly mean ? Are you becoming a convert to my jealous apprehensions ? ”

“ No ; I mean simply this,—that she thinks, since you are about to marry, it is time for her to ‘ go and do likewise.’ Believe me, Ger-

trude, that *bow* upon her cap is intended to shoot *arrows* ;

“ Though where they aim at, no one dreameth.”

The words had scarcely passed his lips, when the whole party was startled, and the very glasses on the table made to tremble, by a piercing shriek ; and Miss Wilson, with her eyes distended beyond even their usual inane dimensions, and fastened upon Gertrude with a look of reproachful appeal, was heard to exclaim in a shrill loud scream of despair, “ Ooh ! the breadth of my gown !”

Had the gown itself cried out from agony at the scalding soup, which it was now discovered, had been, by “ Tom the helper,” precipitated upon it, it could scarcely have produced a more startling effect upon every one present. Upon Gertrude it was such, that she flew round the table to the rescue, as if irresistibly impelled by the startling appeal that had been made to her ; and when arrived there, she found to her amazement that the whole was produced simply

by the passive machine, the walking automaton—"the passionless, fusionless" Miss Wilson, proving herself to be "a woman still"—in perfect agony over an injured dress! Gertrude, absolutely bewildered by the phenomenon, endeavoured to console her in terms more suited to the effect than to the cause, and several napkins were applied to repair the injury: but all efforts were alike in vain to soothe Miss Wilson; the ice was broken, the long-pent stream burst forth, and on she flowed:

"Oh, Miss Evelyn, my gown! my gown! the only handsome, dressy-looking one, I ever had! and as the front breadth was a little soiled, I had just got it altered, and put it to the side!—oh! and put it to the left side on purpose that if anything was spilt it should fall on it! but that odious 'Tom the helper,' (darting a look of fury at him,) who never does anything as he ought, comes flouncing round to my right, and empties the plate on my good side!"

Gertrude actually recoiled a few paces with horror at this awful speech; and there were none present at the moment, who had not been in Miss Wilson's company often enough to be fully aware of the extraordinary circumstance of *any* speech from her. Even placid, gentle Mr. Mason was startled from his usual negative avoidance of her, and advanced a step or two from his place, muttering, "Poor woman ! poor creature ! what ails her ? she must be ill ; something has touched her head ;"—while Mr. Evelyn kept exclaiming eagerly from the other end of the table, "What is the matter ? what is all that ? will nobody answer me ? was it Miss Wilson who cried out and spoke ?"

His doubts were about to be solved on the instant, by the lady herself, who turned and glared on him with that intent, holding up the fatal "breadth" between her hands, when Gertrude, though really palpitating with alarm, apprehending another disgraceful exposure,

hastily exclaimed, in a tone to which her anxiety lent decision, "Miss Wilson, for Heaven's sake speak no more! Pray sit down, and compose yourself, I beg!" Anything like authority was too habitual in its influence over Miss Wilson, to be rejected even in that moment of unnatural excitement; and after turning round from Mr. Evelyn to Gertrude with "the breadth" still stretched between her hands, and an idiotic look and sob of despair, she mechanically resumed her place, and order was to all appearance restored. But the adventures of the night terminated not so peaceably: the flames of a hidden fire may be partially subdued, but if the source be not extinguished they will surely burst out anew.

When the party assembled next morning at breakfast, Gertrude and Major Vandeleur, as they each successively made their appearance, inquired for Mr. Mason, who was so regular in his habits, that, not to find him reading in the window of the breakfast-parlour, was little less

strange, than if that window itself had disappeared. The first inquiries passed without answer or apparent notice ; but as breakfast proceeded, and Gertrude inquired more seriously of Miss Wilson if she knew what had become of Mr. Mason, Mr. Evelyn, unable longer to contain himself, burst out into a long, loud, and uncontrollable fit of laughter. Herbert raised his cup to his face, as if to conceal a smile ; and Miss Wilson put a larger piece of bread than usual into her mouth, but showed no other symptom of concern. Vandeleur and Gertrude stared from one of the party to the other ; but as no one seemed disposed to answer their looks of intelligence, they were obliged to turn them upon each other. Presently Mr. Evelyn, either unable to recover himself, or wishing for a companion in his mirth, rose from the table, and touching Major Vandeleur's shoulder slightly as he passed him, they left the room together. The moment they got outside the door, Mr. Evelyn proceeded

without further preface, to inform Vandeleur that Mr. Mason had actually fled the house for no other purpose, than to shun the persecution of Miss Wilson's love ! Vandeleur of course thought the joke too good to be true ; but he was soon satisfied of his sceptical error, and his enjoyment of it then, was scarcely inferior to that of Mr. Evelyn himself.

The circumstances were as follows :—It was Mr. Mason's custom, especially when any strangers dined at Beauton, to leave the dining-room almost immediately after the ladies, to enjoy either a solitary walk, or the society of more instructive companions in the library. To this apartment, which immediately adjoined his own, and which was nearly as sacred from the intrusion of the females of the family, or indeed of Mr. Evelyn himself, though not from exactly the same reasons, he had betaken himself for a quiet hour, on the evening of the gown adventure. Not being able to lay his hand on a book which he had been reading before dinner,

he passed on into his own room, to see whether he might not have left it there. He had not been many minutes engaged in this search, when his attention was arrested by hearing a light, at least a female's, step in the library. He was surprised, but resolved to wait until the unwelcome visitor, who had probably merely come in search of some old romance, should have retired. The step, however, was suddenly checked, as if from uncertainty or disappointment, ere it had advanced many paces into the room. There was a moment's pause ; the step was resumed, and seemed approaching towards his bed-room : he turned quickly round to see whom it could be, and, let the reader imagine his astonishment, when he beheld Miss Wilson advanced several paces into his room, and standing before him with a simper on her odd face that seemed to say—" Yes, here I am !"

Mr. Mason certainly was no Hector ; his literary habits, if not his natural character, precluded this ; but neither was he deficient in that

'moral courage, the constant attendant on the wise and good. Yet must it be confessed, that as this apparition met his view, and all the accompanying circumstances darted into his mind,—his remote chamber—the solitary hour—Miss Wilson's exhibition at dinner—the miraculous breadth of the gown, which had caused even the dumb to speak, now impassively interposed between him and the library, the only place where he felt himself invincible and hitherto safe, — the simper broaden upon the inane countenance—her venturing, or even finding her way, up his staircase at all,—and, though last not least, the sudden change from her usually quiet and unobtrusive deportment;—as all these circumstances crowded at once upon his mind, it must be confessed that his courage so utterly forsook him, that he first glanced at the door, which was behind her, and which therefore he could not gain without passing nearer to her—then at the windows, which were behind himself, but which being some thirty feet from the

ground, he could not escape by without the risk of breaking his neck, and finally edged towards the fire-place, in order to be within reach of—the poker !

Alas ! it is too true ! Miss Wilson, whether it was that she perceived his design and wished to arrest it, or whether it was that she thought she had acted dumb show long enough, suddenly jerked herself (it could not be called springing,) towards him, and, seizing one of his hands between both hers, looked up into his face with an expression which, if not insinuating, was certainly meant to be so, as she stood precisely in the attitude in which Liston says, “ I hope I don’t intrude ! ” and continued to simper and peer in a fearful manner with both lips and eyes. Good, gentle, gentlemanly Mr. Mason !—it is painful to expose any little weakness on his part—but the best and greatest of us are mortal still, and subject, at some unlucky moment, to human frailties and affections !—The truth must be told—the good old man shouted aloud !

It was of no use—Miss Wilson was undaunted ! We have already said that the ice that incrusted her meagre intellect, and bound her tongue, was broken, by whatever spell ; and her imbecility once set a-going, it was as impossible to stop it, as it had hitherto proved to excite her. Mr. Mason struggled to release his hand, and she struggled to retain it ; and as he was absolutely trembling with terror, and nervously anxious to avoid further contact with her, by using his other hand, she was successful, in spite of all his efforts, in retaining her grasp of his thin fingers, while now stretched on tip-toe, she kept shrilly crying out—“ Mr. Mason ! Mr. Mason ! you mistake me, sir ; I ’m not going to hurt you ! Why, dear me, sir, hear reason ; I don’t want to hurt you ! ”

It is impossible to say how this most unusual struggle might have terminated, but that, just as it had arrived at this point, one of the women servants, who usually arranged the sleeping apartments at that hour, suddenly opened a

door of the room, which Mr. Mason had forgotten in his sudden terror, being one he never used, and which only opening on the servants' staircase, the housemaid generally kept locked. No sooner did she put her head into the room, and perceive how it was occupied, than, uttering a faint scream, she hastily withdrew. This seemed to have some slight effect even upon Miss Wilson, and she involuntarily slackened her hold; which Mr. Mason instantly taking advantage of, with a vigorous effort shook his hand free, and made towards the door by which the woman had retired. Miss Wilson pursued him. It was needless. The woman, true to her constant custom, in her amazement departed not from it, and had locked the door behind her! Mr. Mason groaned, and Miss Wilson chuckled! He turned his eyes heavily and despairingly towards the other door; and the fearful barrier being now removed, he made a desperate rush towards it. Alas! he was a frail and feeble old man! Miss Wilson per.

ceived his design, and plunged after him ; and being much the more active of the two, she reached the goal first ; and as she whisked round in triumph, having locked the door, and popped the key into the unfathomable depths of her pocket, Mr. Mason and she dashed plump against each other ! Miss Wilson absolutely laughed. If the laugh of Dominie Sampson produced a very serious effect upon a delicate woman, most certainly that of Miss Wilson did not leave Mr. Mason unmoved ; or rather, it rendered him immovable. He sank down upon a chair in utter exhaustion both of mind and body, really beginning to think that all the powers of earth, if not of another region, were leagued against him, and faintly repeated to himself — “ Oh, my God, what is all this ! ” Miss Wilson took advantage of his apparent resignation, and approached him : he hastily pressed his hands over his eyes, as if to avail himself of the only means that were left him to escape at least from beholding the frightful

vision. She, however, remained perfectly unmoved, and addressed him in these words :

“ Now, Mr. Mason, what is the matter with you ? why do you treat me so rudely ? ”

The hand was for a moment withdrawn to wither her with a look of indignant astonishment ; but as it utterly failed of its effect, after another hopeless glance at both the doors, the hand was firmly replaced, and she continued with the utmost solemnity —

“ Mr. Mason, are you saying your prayers ? I thought you were going to answer me : why do you treat me so rudely, (no movement from the poor despairing old man now,) by receiving me in such a manner, when I am come into your room to speak to you on a most serious business ? ”

A low stifled groan told more plainly than any words could have done, that, let the business be what it might, to him it was serious enough.

She proceeded. “ Yes, Mr. Mason, and a

business that concerns you as well as me. You see, Miss Evelyn is going to be married, and Mr. Herbert going to college" ——

She paused, and once more the hand was withdrawn, in utter amazement at so rational an observation from her; and though habit so far prevailed as to prevent his thinking it necessary to use *words* to her, his countenance pretty plainly expressed, "Well?"

"Well," she said; "and what is then to become of you and me?"

His countenance grew dark and despairing again.

"Indeed, Mr. Mason, I should never think of coming forward in this manner if you were a young man; but as you have seen that other men, your superiors in rank and fortune, have courted me, and as you are a poor desolate old man, there can be no harm in my saying at once to you, that it seems to me the best thing we can do is to marry and take care of each other!"

We must leave the matter here ; no words, no language, could give any idea of Mr. Mason's situation at the moment his ears received these words, uttered, as they evidently were, in perfect seriousness and earnestness. He stared, he gaped, he literally gasped at her ; and the first words he uttered since she entered the room were, after a considerable pause, and with the utmost solemnity, as if a new light had broken on him —

“ Woman ! are you drunk ? ”

“ Drunk ! indeed I am not, Mr. Mason. But now just tell me what better we could do ? ”

Another stare of more unmixed horror and detestation was followed by the answer—

“ To die ! and be d—d ! ”

If we have succeeded in giving our readers the remotest idea of Mr. Mason's natural and acquired gentleness and philosophy, this violent answer will go farther than any description, to show the state of horror and despair to which he was driven ; and, let it be remembered, all

this time hopelessly locked up with his tormentor in his own room !

She remained still utterly unmoved.

“Nay, now, Mr. Mason, why do you answer that way? You cannot but have some feeling for me, after living so many years together.”

“*I have!*” he groaned forth, with an emphasis that could not have been mistaken by any one else, but by obtuse Miss Wilson it really was.

“And now, Mr. Mason, if you have, what hinders you from marrying me, and our spending our lives together?”

“Woman! spend your life with the devil if you will! what have you or I to do with each other?”

“Just this, sir; that you’ll see, if we marry together, the family will settle something handsome on us to support us.”

It must here be remembered that Mr. Mason was a liberal, learned, and gentlemanly-minded man, though from adverse circumstances and his

own primitive simplicity, he never rose above being dependent on his talents for comfortable support. It may be imagined, then, how far the consideration now suggested tended to sweeten his innamorata's preceding proposal. It actually roused him to fury, and suddenly springing from his seat, he seized her by the arm, and exclaimed, "Woman ! you are either drunk or possessed with an evil spirit. Give me the key this very moment, or I vow to Heaven I will take it by force, and throw you out of the window !"

Miss Wilson was not one of those sensitive persons to whom cowardice belongs, and accordingly she began once more—

"Now, Mr. Mason——" but he stopped her short by turning to the bell, and ringing it furiously, exclaimed, "Now, madam, see how you will look when the servants fly up, thinking I am only on fire !"

She did consider it, and instantly producing the key, handed it to him; though, while he was

unlocking the door, she kept muttering, " Well, Mr. Mason, you are not wise—you don't know what's good for you. God knows, I meant nothing but to secure a provision for us both in the simplest manner ; and you're ungrateful too, for it is to please you that I have studied my dress of late ! and little I'd have cared about the breadth of my gown but for *you* !"

Mr. Mason, who by this time had got the door open, gave her one more look of contemptuous aversion, and was motioning her out through the library, when she said, " Well, if I had foreseen all this, I'll engage I never would have refused Mr. Nelson : but, besides that I never thought of Miss Evelyn's marrying so soon, I thought that whenever it did happen I was always sure of you !" And so saying, she left the room, apparently without resentment or confusion, by one door just as the servants entered by the other.

Of course the woman who answered the bell appeared with a grin and a simper.

“ Go tell your master I must speak with him instantly.”

The woman stared. “ My master, sir, has not left the dining-room yet.”

“ No matter ; tell him I must speak with him this very moment.”

The message was sent in, and in a few minutes Mr. Evelyn came running up stairs, all astonishment and curiosity, having first ascertained from the servant that no accident had happened. He found Mr. Mason busily engaged packing up his clothes.

“ Good God ! Mr. Mason, what’s the matter ? where are you going ?”

“ Oh, sir, to perdition, I believe ; my brain is turned—I never was in such a state before.”

“ Explain yourself, Mr. Mason, I entreat you ; what has happened, in the name of Heaven ?”

“ Oh, mention any name but that, sir ! The infernal——But no, I won’t debase myself.”

And as calmly as he could he informed Mr. Evelyn of the scene that had just occurred.

It may easily be guessed what intensity of delight it afforded to a man of Mr. Evelyn's idle but jovial disposition and habits. He laughed until he saw Mr. Mason had nearly concluded his packing, utterly regardless of his mirth ; he then endeavoured most anxiously to dissuade him from his purpose of departure ; and, finally, when he could not laugh him out of it, by pointing out the ridicule that would necessarily attach itself to the procedure, he seriously assured him, that if either must quit the field, Miss Wilson should be the one. But of this Mr. Mason would not hear : he said, and said truly, that he had all along intended absenting himself during the wedding festivities ; that this untoward matter only hastened his departure ; and that Herbert was long as fit for college as he could render him. In short, all that Mr. Evelyn could obtain was his pro-

mise not to engage himself elsewhere, without communicating with them again ; and as Miss Wilson's services would probably terminate with Miss Evelyn's marriage, that he would then return to them at least upon a visit.

It was then settled that, in order to avoid exciting curiosity and explanations, no one should be made aware of his intentions that night except Herbert ; and before any of the rest of the family had left their pillows next morning, he was driven by his attached and grateful pupil, to the town of B——, to meet the coach that started from thence for the north of England, where his family resided. His books and more heavy luggage he left behind him as a pledge of his return.

Such were the consequences that ensued from the unlooked-for, unhopèd-for, unexpected proposal of marriage from one sickly old bachelor, operating upon a weak and nearly idiotic mind, which admitted of but one idea—that of provision—not emolument—merely provision ; and

even that, only by negative means, such as should be suggested by others, and not counteracted by herself. The moment she attempted to act or think for herself, all was absurd chaos: and her having resisted the probably not very pressing, or energetic proposal of Mr. Nelson, can only be accounted for, by supposing, in addition to what she said herself, that she really was so taken by surprise, (it being the first time in her life such an address had ever been made to her,) that she knew not what she did.

Some will be pleased to say that such surprises generally affect ladies the other way: but those are ladies whose thoughts have been long and deeply engaged upon the subject in the affirmative light, which Miss Wilson's in reality never had been. Besides, to counterbalance whatever of that propensity is absolutely inseparable from a lady's nature, the first mention of it only presented to her mind the prospect of quitting the substantial comforts of

Beauton; and as she never had been in the habit of looking before her, this prospect, which would have been the one ever present to a more rational mind, in order to provide against its consequences, came to her with all the force of a most disagreeable novelty, and she hastily rejected what seemed to her calculated to produce it. When the marriage of Miss Evelyn forced the consideration on her mind again, and she saw no one appearing desirous to renew Mr. Nelson's offer, she, for the first time, ventured to think and act for herself—with what effect the reader is aware, and we must only hope that it might deter her from such unnatural efforts of mind in future. It seemed for the present, indeed, to have done so; for she at once subsided again into her own quiet and taciturn habits; and even her dress, to the mortification of Major Vandeleur's vanity, sank to its former level, or perhaps a little below it. It was remarkable that she never even once inquired what had become of Mr. Mason. In

former times, indeed, this would not have been noticed in her; but, after such an explosion, minor sparks were naturally expected still, now and then, to scintillate.

It was not so, however; she was true to her second self; and as Gertrude, though she now experienced an odd and unpleasantly uncertain feeling towards her, would not suffer her to be quizzed or tormented on the subject, the family resumed their usual habits, as far as she was concerned, as much as if no such disturbance had ever occurred. The ocean subsides as perfectly after a rock has been cast from an Almighty hand, as when a pebble has been flung by an infant: the greatest misfortunes or the greatest joys are forgotten in their effects, as well as the trifle of the moment; the only difference is in the time they each require.

In the mean while, days flew by at Beauton on the wings of love—the most rapid, but the least enduring of Time's many wings! The first cloud that was seen to hover over those assem-

bled there, since the auspicious hour of Major Vandeleur's arrival amongst them, appeared on the occasion of his going to London, to make some necessary arrangements, and to bring his mother to be present at his wedding. Still, it was but a summer-cloud; and so bright, and so pure, was the expanse of happiness across which it passed, that it excited a smile rather than a tear, in the grateful hearts which it overshadowed. He departed; and we shall avail ourselves of his absence to take a peep at his past life, and endeavour to throw light upon one or two allusions which he made to other days, in his letter to his mother.

CHAPTER IV.

Can I not serve you ? you are young, and of
That mould which throws out heroes ; fair in favour,

* * * * *

And doubtlessly, with such a form and heart,
Would look into the fiery eyes of war
As ardently for glory as you dared
An obscure death to save an unknown stranger.

Werner.

GODFREY VANDELEUR's father had been the younger son of a respectable, but by no means wealthy family. Nor had they to boast of, or bewail, any gradual or sudden "decline and fall." They had for generations been respectable both in class and character, and there was no record of their ever having been much higher or much lower in human estimation—probably,

therefore, they never had been. His mother had more to boast of: she was the daughter of a clergyman much more highly connected; but as she was one of nine daughters,

“Her portion was but scant;”

and as the glebe-house occupied by her father was very near to one of the residences of his noble friend and patron, the Marquis of Hampton, into whose society it was the darling hope of his heart to see his children as they grew up admitted, he made that portion still smaller, by educating each of them “to the top of their bent.” Mrs. Vandeleur was at once the most amiable, and the most highly-gifted amongst them; and yet, as it was impossible for a conscientious clergyman to confine his family to the occasional society of Lord Hampton’s mansion, she formed an attachment with Mr. Vandeleur, which was extremely regretted by her father. She would not offend him; and therefore it was not until after his death, which, by depriving his children of the chief source of

their provision, and all their claim to "looking high," rendered Mr. Vandeleur a perfectly suitable match for her, that she yielded to the dictates of an affection, which, had she followed her own inclinations, would have led her to share a throne with him, if such had been her lot. They purchased the lease of a small farm between them, and retired to it, determined to endeavour by close attention, and strict economy, to avoid the guilt of bringing a family into the world to abject poverty, and its almost constant attendant, vice.

The education which the young ladies had received, the cultivation of their father, and the society they had mingled in, could not fail to impart a polish and elegance both of mind and manners to Mrs. Vandeleur and her sisters, which produced different effects on their different tempers. Some, when their father's death deprived them of these advantages, preferred brooding over past enjoyments in solitary retirement, or boasting of them among humbler

friends, to forgetting them in any subordinate station ; while Mrs. Vandeleur, with a superior mind, and more real dignity of character, only looked back to more prosperous times with grateful acknowledgment for the means she had acquired in them, of rendering her husband's lowly home more agreeable to him, and of educating her family herself, without incurring the expense of other teachers.

All this promised fairly ; but when, after about nine years of wedded happiness, Mr. Vandeleur paid the forfeit of his life, for the imprudence of standing out too long under violent rain, in his anxiety to see some part of his harvest made safe from injury, the scene to his widow was sadly changed. He left her with two children, a boy and girl ; and although, by his prudent and diligent management, they had hitherto found their little property amply sufficient for their wants and moderate wishes, Mrs. Vandeleur soon found the difference between a

master's eye and that of a timid woman, now sunk in the depths of affliction.

Still, she felt unwilling to part with what had been purchased in such happy times, and cultivated and improved by so dear a hand ; and it was not until an event occurred which deprived her home of half its remaining charms, that she could allow her mind even to dwell upon the necessity of parting with it.

The death of her little girl, which took place within the year after that of her father, had such an effect upon the mind of the poor widowed mother, that, to save her from sinking altogether under the pressure of her calamity, she felt it was now become absolutely necessary for her to seek to engage her attention in some scene, not calculated every moment to remind her of her double bereavement.

Her noble boy, now about nine years old, she felt already called for other instruction than she could afford him, even although she had stepped

a little beyond the limits usually prescribed to her sex, and gave him herself his first rudiments of Latin. This was a serious, indeed an awful consideration to her; for of inferior English schools she had a horror instilled into her by her highly-educated father, and at an expensive one she had not the means of placing him, and at the same time supporting herself.

In this dilemma it occurred to her to write to Lord Hampton, on one of whose estates her farm was situated, to request of him to take it off her hands. All intercourse had indeed ceased between her family and his, since her father's death, and her removal to a distant part of the country; but his character was so well known to her, for considerate kindness and liberality, that she preferred a direct address to him to any intermediate application.

Her feelings were in some degree soothed by a letter from himself soon after, saying that the following autumn, which was the time she named, the farm should be taken off her hands

upon her own terms. She was not so weak as not to appreciate and rejoice in this liberal acceding to her wishes, yet she nearly effaced the characters of the letter in her tears. There is scarcely anything makes one weep so much as a favour conferred cheerfully and kindly, in the belief it is giving pleasure, which yet it is only severe necessity could induce us to accept: it shows us, somehow, so plainly how little our feelings are understood by others.

Young Vandeleur happened to run past the window with his dog, as his mother was thus engaged, and his quick dark eyes instantly perceiving her affliction, he sprang into the house, and shutting out his dog, contrary to his wont, as if he felt it was no scene for him, threw his arms round his mother's neck, and leaned his head on hers in silence. He had been accustomed to see her weep, and supposed it still to be for the same cause. At last he perceived the letter lying open on her lap, and her eyes, now and then, fix themselves on it.

“Dearest mother,” he said gently, “just tell me if anything new has happened to afflict you?”

“No, my sweet boy, it is not affliction that makes me weep,—it is weakness, folly, sinfulness!”

“Nay, mother, whatever it is, let me share it.”

“Even such as I have described it, Godfrey?”

“Even so, mamma: if you are suffering from it, I will share it with you.”

Need it be told that the mother kissed the brown cheek of her manly boy? “But Godfrey, I fear the news will afflict you on your own account.”

The boy started, and his innocent mind ran hastily over the catalogue of his favourites,—his dogs, his bullfinch, his father’s gun.

“What is it, mamma?”

“Should you be very sorry to go from hence, Godfrey?”

“Go from hence!—no, mamma. I know I must go from hence some time; and, only for

you, I wish I were in the army now, to fight that young general who is oppressing the poor Italians."

"Why, whom did you hear speaking of General Bonaparte?"

The boy reddened and looked down : he had learned not to speak of his father unnecessarily to his poor mother.

"Well, but Godfrey," she resumed, stifling a sigh, "it is not to go into the army, but to go and live elsewhere, and to give up this place for ever."

"Indeed, mamma, I don't care much if Cæsar, and Pompey, and old Corcoran come with us : Whistle I can bring in my hand."

"Your whistle, boy !"

The boy laughed.

"No, mamma, not *my* whistle, but Whistle the bullfinch."

"It is nearly as bad. Go, child—go out and play." And she pushed him from her, with a kind of jealous affection.

The child lingered in the room, evidently disconcerted. The course of the mother's tears was checked, and she rose to leave the room, saying as she passed him, "What is the matter? why don't you go out and play? I'm not angry with you."

"No, mamma, but worse—you are disappointed with me, and what could I do else?"

"Nothing, child; it was I was wrong—unreasonable. There, (kissing him,) go away now to your Cæsar; see, he's sitting at the window looking in for you."

How little even the fondest and most attentive of parents sometimes know the workings of a child's mind! Doubtless Mrs. Vandeleur thought that, in thus condescending to allude to his dog, she had proved to her son that all unpleasant feelings had passed from her mind: but it is not until custom and the habits of society have taught us that *words* are all that we can be called upon actually to acknowledge, that the more natural evidences of our feelings are overlooked.

It was not until the child was asleep that night, that his mother learned the true workings of his manly little heart. He was aware that she was in the habit of going over to look at him in his little bed every night before she retired to her own, as the last sweet duty that depended on his earthly parent, before she gave him up for the night to his heavenly one; and although, in spite of all his efforts for a quarter of an hour against it, sleep had closed his eyes long before she came up, she found laid upon his warm and rosy cheek a letter directed, in his childish hand, "To mamma." She opened it in no small surprise, and read the following lines, which we venture to present to the reader, as affording the first dawnings of a character in which we hope they are already somewhat interested.

"Mamma, who is the wisest, best,
With which a child was ever blest,
Once told me we must leave our home
Upon the strange wide world to roam;
And ask'd if I should greatly grieve
My own nice darling home to leave.

What could I say? Papa had taught me,
No matter what regret it brought me,
To try to spare mamma all pain :
And if she cannot here remain,
Was it for me to grieve her more
By counting all our losses o'er ?
Should I have said ' Mamma, don't go
From where papa and Jane lie low ;—
Oh, do not leave the darling spot
Where he so often bless'd his lot ;
Leave not the pretty chestnut-tree
Where he used often have his tea ;
Leave not the rose and jasmine bower
He twined to shade you from a shower ;
Leave not the spot which you have said
Was sacred by the honour'd dead :—
Was it for me to say all this,
Just for myself to gain a kiss ?
I would not make my mother cry
For twenty kisses more — not I.
I'd rather try to make her feel
My heart was made of wood or steel,
Which, though they may be cut full deep
For use, will never melt or weep.
And if I named my dogs and bird,
'Twas but to show, upon my word,
That all that I could bring about
With ease to her I would not scout.
And as they love me, I'd regret
To leave them here behind to fret :
But if this would her grief incur,
Why let them fret instead of her."

It may be thought that Mrs. Vandeleur's most prudent and most proper part, on reading this little effusion, would have been to have kissed her child's cheek with such softness as if his life depended on his not being wakened, and to reserve all further expression of her feelings until he came to her next morning. But different circumstances bring different feelings and different modes of acting: the former would perhaps have been the most natural to the happy wife who could have flown to the bosom of her husband, and there given utterance to all she felt.

With the lonely and widowed mother of little Godfrey the case was very different, and she neither could nor wished to restrain herself from rousing her boy, by murmuring on his cheek, "Godfrey, Godfrey, my son, speak to your mother and forgive her."

The child wakened, started, and stared wildly round him for a moment, utterly forgetful of all that had passed. Presently, his eyes be-

coming more reconciled to the light, and falling on his own letter, the whole circumstance rushed at once to his mind, and with a smile and a blush he hid his face in his mother's bosom.

She held him there for more than a minute. "And these were your real feelings, my child?" she said at last.

The poet was all forgotten, and the simple answer, "They were, mamma," was all he whispered.

His mother seemed at a loss how to speak to him. She pressed his head for a moment more closely to her bosom; then gently raising his face, she took off his nightcap, that she might the more fully indulge herself in the sweet delusion of having already found another friend and guardian of her feelings in her almost infant child.

The verses, which it may well be believed she looked on with a mother's partiality, were in that hour forgotten even by her, and, from

the utter incapacity she felt to suit her feelings to mortal ears, she said, "Godfrey, my child, leave your bed for a moment and pray with your mother." Her prayer we shall not repeat ; but it taught her child, in that happy, glowing moment, the comprehensive lesson to give thanks for being already enabled to give happiness to his parent's widowed heart. That hour and that prayer never were forgotten. She replaced him on his little couch, and his happy spirit was soon away in fairy-land again.

Not so with her. The excitement of her feelings, although joyous, did not so rapidly subside : she seemed to have got a new spirit of exertion within her, and for that night, at least, she thought every sacrifice would be light to her for the sake of that noble boy ; and that, above all things, no selfish pining of hers should ever again cast a shade over his buoyant and joyous spirit.

One more consequence ensued from this little adventure. A mother's partiality is a thing of

so different a nature from a critic's justice, that it has not unfrequently been known blindly to beguile those it has loved best, into the fangs of the latter, where they perhaps barely escaped annihilation, physical as well as moral. And really I think this very reflection should make critics merciful, as it belongs not to mortals to visit the sins of the father upon the children.

In the present instance, however, it only led to Mrs. Vandeleur's thinking it of even more importance than she ever did before, that her son should receive the most liberal education ; and though a sensible and even a clever woman, her mind floated away for a moment to the bench or the stall, if not to the woolsack or the mitre themselves : a field-officer's epaulettes indeed glittered before her eyes for a moment ; but from them she turned away, for they were presented to her on the point of a sword steeped in blood.

As the preliminary step, however, to all or

to any of this advancement, she remembered that it was necessary she should herself make some exertion, and before sleep closed her eyes, the true-hearted woman, and affectionate mother, had come to the determination of looking out, between the present time and the following autumn, for a situation as governess in some family, of such character and consequence, as should take from the office any appearance of degradation, that could hereafter call a blush into the cheek of the son for whose sake she made the sacrifice, and for whose future fate she looked so high.

Fortune, or a higher Power, seemed to favour her laudable resolution on this head. About a month before the time arrived at which she was to give up her sweet cottage-home, and while she was yet anxiously looking around for another, in which to remain until she could permanently settle herself to her satisfaction, or rather according to her judgment, she received the following letter from Lord Hampton :—

“ DEAR MADAM,

“ At the time I received your letter on the subject of your farm, my mind was so painfully occupied by an impending domestic calamity, that I could only reply to the application in the very briefest terms. You have doubtless since heard of the loss I have sustained, and that my little girl is deprived by death of her excellent mother. Believe me, madam, I am at all times sincerely interested in whatever concerns you, or any member of your esteemed father's family ; yet I am not by any means certain that selfishness may not be my chief motive in the proposal I am about to take the liberty of making to you. Should there be in it anything unpleasant to your feelings, or wholly foreign to your views, I hope you will excuse it on the assurance, that no motives should have induced me knowingly to offend against either. My intention is immediately to procure for my little girl, the advantage of the constant and affectionate care of some lady, whose mind,

manners, and accomplishments, may in some degree lessen to her the loss she has sustained. I am aware how difficult it is to meet with such who would condescend to the situation; but allow me to point out to you, madam, that, as far as is possible, it shall in this case, for my own satisfaction, be divested of every appearance of a subordinate one. The lady shall have the entire control and management of the child, who is only five years old, with *carte blanche* for her expenses as to masters, attendants, and minor matters; and a small suite of apartments, for her own and her little protégée's use, in whichever of my residences she may prefer. At the same time I should hope always to be favoured with the lady's presence at my dinner-table, and as much as possible in my drawing-room; as it is quite my hobby that every one, as well as the child herself, should understand that her maternal friend is not a mere governess. For other considerations, I have no hesitation in saying we cannot fail to agree, as I

should think almost any remuneration too small for one who was qualified to meet my wishes on this important matter : and in casting my eyes around me, I can think of no one who, from my own knowledge, and pleasing recollection of her various excellences and superior mind and manners, seems to me to unite all I could desire so completely as Mrs. Vandeleur. Should it so happen that the offer meets your approbation, I shall, believe me, feel myself doubly gratified.

“ I have the honour to remain,

“ Dear madam,

“ Your friend and servant,

“ HAMPTON.”

“ London, August 17.”

It is unnecessary to dwell upon the gratitude, the delight, with which Mrs. Vandeleur received this proposal, magnificent of its kind. She clasped her boy in her arms ; and although floods of tears convinced him that their hour of parting was at hand, still there was something

in her embraces and her countenance, that told to his feeling and intelligent mind and heart, that there was joy mingled with her sorrow.

The farm with all it contained was soon after taken off her hands at a liberal valuation, the proceeds placed at interest in her son's name, and in less than a month he was settled at an excellent and highly respectable school in ———shire; and she proceeded to join Lord Hampton's family in London, where they had remained in consequence of the marchioness's illness.

The school at which Mrs. Vandeleur had placed her son by the advice of one of her brothers, combined what in her situation were great advantages. It was one of those schools which were established at the time that the French Revolution sent so many to seek refuge in England, partly on the speculation of being able to procure foreign teachers on very low terms; and as it was conducted by an English gentleman of sense, prudence, and judgment, it did in-

deed afford the most polite and liberal education on comparatively moderate terms. But besides these substantial advantages, it had one more in the eyes of the fond mother, which perhaps would have outweighed them all had she listened to her feelings rather than to her reason: happily in the present instance they went hand-in-hand.

The school was situated about six miles from Seaton, the favourite country residence of the Marquis of Hampton; which gave to her heart the hope that she should frequently, in the summer months, be able to see her boy; though her propriety and native dignity determined her to keep the matter of his vicinity a secret from Lord Hampton. Accordingly, when he on her arrival politely inquired how she had disposed of her son, she slightly answered, that she had placed him at school in the country by the advice of one of his uncles; and the matter passed from Lord Hampton's mind.

It is now time to say a few words of her

little pupil. The young Countess of Seaton was the only child of the Marquis of Hampton. She inherited her mother's title, and was heiress to the greater part of her father's possessions. From a long line of noble ancestry on both sides of her house, the Lady Seaton derived propensities and talents as noble ; but with them a loftiness and independence of character, which was perceptible at the very earliest age, and which it required the most watchful and judicious care of her maternal friend, to temper down into the gentle, amiable, and feminine creature she afterwards became.

To check a spirit which in itself was all generosity, noble pride, and dislike of being controlled, would have seemed a superfluous, perhaps an indiscreet endeavour, to the many who deem such qualities the fit accompaniments of rank and power, as rendering their possessors properly alive to the distance between themselves and less fortunate mortals. But the judicious friend to whom the care of forming

Lady Seaton's character was committed, thought differently. Her study of the human heart, and her experience in life, alike tended to convince her, that the sense of one's own superior advantages over others much oftener requires the rein than the spur. Her efforts, therefore, all tended to render Lady Seaton *worthy* of the elevation of her rank ; and the plan she adopted to prepare her for commanding others, was by teaching her to command herself ;—an exercise which, without the risk of engendering pride, arrogance, or hard-heartedness, has the effect of forming that strength of mind, and decision of character, which are indispensable to the due employment of wealth or power.

Before her pupil had completed her tenth year, she already felt in some degree rewarded for the anxious care bestowed on her most arduous undertaking, when one day the little girl came running back to her from a walk, down which she had gambolled before her, with a blush of mortified pride upon her cheek, as she

exclaimed, "I am humbled, dear madam, I am humbled! I have been commanded by my passions, and I yielded to them:" and her lustrous black eyes swam in tears.

She had met the gardener carrying some fruit to the house, and had taken a rosy apple, which was to her forbidden fruit. She now handed it half-eaten to her governess; and though offered permission to reap the fruits of her disobedience, she flung it from her in indignation and disgust.

Lady Seaton was beautiful, as I think most of the daughters of our English aristocracy are: it can scarcely be otherwise, with their delicately transparent complexions, which establish at once an impression of high nurture and refinement—their finely-formed noses, that distinguishing feature of race and even of country—and their fair shining tresses.

Lord Hampton lived as a great English noble ought to live, much in the world both in town and country; and the young countess

was from her very birth accustomed to mingle with the *élite* of the earth. Mrs. Vandeleur was ever at her side. From the moment that Lord Hampton made clear his wishes that it should be so, she took her station in society at his house, and conducted herself in it, with such becoming and inherent dignity, aided by graceful and polished manners, that she was as much respected and esteemed by every class, as if she never had moved out of that elevated sphere.

It was impossible that this judicious attention to his wishes, and her complete success so far in the education of his heiress, should pass unnoticed by a man of Lord Hampton's discernment and liberal feelings. Notwithstanding her noble salary, he still felt himself her debtor, and looked forward to the pleasure of marking his approbation by forwarding her son in whatever profession he should select, whenever he became old enough to profit by it: and once or twice of late he asked what his age was, and expressed a hope that he was receiving a

thoroughly good education. Perhaps, had he known that, at the moment he made these inquiries, the boy was so near to him, his kind consideration and respect for Mrs. Vandeleur had led him even further. The matter, however, was destined not to remain longer a secret.

It was customary with Lord Hampton, when in the country, to take what he called constitutional rides, in the morning, round his grounds, before any of his guests appeared. One morning, when riding as usual along a broad walk that ran all round the demesne inside the wall, his attention was attracted by loud and angry voices, and sounds of contention, which seemed rapidly increasing. At last the words—"I am unwilling, sir, to bid my men fire upon you," convinced him there was no time to be lost if he meant to interfere; and galloping to the nearest gate, which happened to be a very short distance before him, he was in a moment or two up with the party. It consisted of a recruiting serjeant, a party of soldiers, a young

lad (who seemed just enlisted, and whose bullet-eyes and large stolid face were swelled even beyond their usual dimensions by blubbering), and two young gentlemen, one of whom appeared to be from fifteen to sixteen years of age, tall and handsome-looking, with large dark eyes, which now, in his anger, seemed to emit sparks of fiery indignation ; the other, some years older, and evidently, as well by his appearance, as by his accent, a foreigner.

There was a temporary cessation of hostilities the moment Lord Hampton appeared ; and upon his inquiring the cause of the disturbance, both of the young men hesitating how to answer, the serjeant proceeded to inform him, that he was conducting the young recruit, on whose collar he still kept a firm grasp, and whom he stated to have enlisted the evening before, to the next town, where the regiment was quartered, when he was pursued by the taller of those two young gentlemen, (pointing out the young Englishman,) who not only urged and

instigated the young candidate for martial honours, to throw back the bounty-money he had received, but threatened to beat the serjeant and assist him in escaping.

"Indeed, my lord," added the man, who knew Lord Hampton's appearance, "I think him mad, for my part; for he offered to enlist himself instead of this here chap."

"And this other young gentleman?" asked the marquis with a look of grave and determined patience and inquiry.

"That other young gentleman, my lord, I know nothing of: he came up but now, and was taking my part against this other madcap. I was loth to go to extremities with him, seeing they are both pupils of Mr. Hamilton's establishment near this."

"How far off?"

"Five miles or so, my lord."

"Proceed, serjeant, on your route," said the marquis with authority, "and I shall make it my business to inquire from Mr. Hamilton how

it happens that his young gentlemen are wandering the country at these hours, and disturbing persons in the discharge of their duty."

"By Heaven he shall not proceed, though!" exclaimed the English youth. "My lord, I beg your pardon; I have the highest respect for your character and person;"—(the marquis bowed haughtily and impatiently, the young man coloured and went on:)—"these are not words of course, my lord, as you would know if you knew who I am; but this man shall not carry off William Henshawe, whom he enlisted in a fit of intoxication, and leave his family to ruin of every dreadful description."

At this moment the other young man stepped hastily forward, and taking hold of the arm of the speaker, "Come, come," he said, "recollect yourself, my friend, there has been enough of this; don't offend Lord Hampton, and—" he whispered very rapidly a French sentence in his ear, the purport of which was a promise, by everything sacred, that there should be no

more on his part of a certain affair which was understood between them; and added, in the same low and rapid tone, "Take my advice and drop it, or people will very fairly suspect your own intentions."

"Villain and coward!" exclaimed the young man, shaking off his hand; and forgetful of where he stood, in whose presence, and everything but his indignation at the moment, he struck his school companion a violent blow across the face with a switch he held in his hand.

In the impulse of the moment the blow was returned, and it was only on a muttered challenge being given, and accepted, that they were dragged asunder.

The Marquis of Hampton, highly incensed, once more commanded the serjeant to proceed; telling him at the same time, if he was again interrupted, to order his soldiers to do their duty.

"Then let them fire on me!" exclaimed the young man, "if so it must be; and do you,

William Henshawe, either quietly proceed and leave your sister to destruction, or stand by me and share my fate."

This speech, uttered as it was with all the vehemence of truth, as he was far from intending that matters should proceed to any extremity with the headstrong youth, however he might wish to intimidate him from interfering further with the serjeant, attracted the marquis's attention, and afforded him a pretext for again inquiring into the merits of this case, which at present appeared rather extraordinary.

He no sooner made known his wishes to that effect, than the young Frenchman coming forward, apologised politely and handsomely for his share in the matter, and said, that being unwilling to trespass further on the Marquis of Hampton, or to discuss the business any further on the high road, he should beg leave to retire, certain that, whatever passion might lead his young friend to be guilty of, he could rely

implicitly on his honour and veracity, and that he would assert nothing to the prejudice of any one which he could not prove, and therefore he left his character with confidence in his hands." He turned to depart.

"It shall not avail you not one single iota ! all the fine speeches you can make to me," returned his companion ; "the more honour and truth I possess, the worse for you ; so stay and defend yourself if you can, for I tell you plainly my generosity will not be the least worked on to spare you in your absence."

But ere this exhortation, however loudly uttered, came to its conclusion, it was borne by the wind far from the ears it was intended for.

There was a moment's silence ; the marquis was a man of too much discernment not to be struck with the reliance on the young man's honour and truth, and, as it seemed to him, his generosity also, evinced by his companion and now antagonist ; and he waited for the de-

fence of his late conduct with a secret hope that it would prove a sufficient one. But the youth seemed suddenly to have lost his courage and bold bearing, and stood with an irresolute and vexed expression of countenance.

At last the marquis said, "Well, young gentleman, I thought you were about to give some explanation of this strange and disgraceful scene?"

"I had intended it, my lord, if that fellow had stayed: but, as he said, it is a different thing to accuse a man to his face and let him defend himself, from speaking behind his back what, after all, I certainly can not swear to."

"Come, come," said the marquis, "this is either trifling, or the very romance of youthful generosity, which, if it be allowed to run headlong at first, and outstrip justice, will soon exhaust itself, and in riper years be left as far behind, by justice: now prudence should be the charioteer, and from the very onset make the two pull side by side together."

“ I understand and like your metaphor, my lord ; but, somehow, one cannot jump at once to everything that’s right : however, I shall try to unite them as well as I can.” And he proceeded to inform Lord Hampton that William Henshawe was the only son of a poor blind old woman, whose chief means of support was the employment this youth received at Mr. Hamilton’s school, where he almost constantly resided, and, being an active and unassuming lad, was frequently admitted to join in their rougher exercises. It happened that, the day before this memorable one, there was a great cricket-match, and the winners gave an entertainment, at which poor Henshawe became so intoxicated, that, on his way home, meeting the recruiting-serjeant, he fell an easy prey to his allurements.

“ Well, my good sir,” said the marquis, in a tone of rather surprised interrogation, “ and if the youth chooses it, what then ? I am sorry to say, it is the way half our soldiers are en-

listed; and we must not be too nice in these times."

"Chooses it, sir!" exclaimed the young man, while the candidate for martial fame groaned in spirit, but seeing his cause in better hands, had the wisdom to leave it there. "Chooses it, my lord! his heart is breaking at this moment; and he would be a brute if it were not so. Is it not, Henshawe?—why don't you answer?"

"I heard no question asked of I before: but no, Mr. Vandeleur, no,—my heart is as tough as another's, I warrant."

Neither Lord Hampton nor even the young gentleman himself could refrain from a smile at this attempt, on the part of the *soldat malgré lui*, to assert his manhood, even against the chance of his escape.

"Well, but I mean," resumed his young champion, "would you not be happy to be let off? I know that, while I live, I never shall forget the scene I witnessed this morning in your

mother's cottage.—“Oh, my lord !” turning to Lord Hampton, “it was really fearful to see the large tears falling from her sightless eyes !” and the young man seemed really to shrink from the recollection.

“And may I take the liberty of inquiring how you happened to be in his mother's cottage at so early an hour ? Methinks Mr. Hamilton gives his young gentlemen a loose rein.”

“The poor old woman sent for me, sir, when she heard what had befallen her son.”

“There is something in all this which I do not yet see through,” said the marquis ; “and until I do, I cannot interfere further in the matter than to protect the serjeant in the discharge of his duty. How came a poor blind old woman to select you amongst all the gentlemen in the country to rescue her son ?”

“Why, my lord,” replied the youth, blushing and hesitating, “I happened to be the only one—at least the one she knew best ; I had seen her more than once before.”

The marquis noticed his hesitation with a scrutinizing eye. "Oh, you had! Pray, does her family only consist of this young man and herself?"

"No, sir; he has a sister—she has a daughter; and, in fact, it is chiefly on her account ———" He again hesitated.

"Humph!" said the marquis, and turning to the serjeant, was about once more to bid him proceed with his recruit, when Henshaw, no longer able to continue silent, exclaimed, "Oh, sir! oh, my lord! do not suffer me to be lost through Mr. Vandeleur's generosity!—for, indeed, it is only that he is loth to speak against that other gentleman, though why I do not know, for they never were friends like—not they."

"Well, sir, never mind canvassing this gentleman's motives: if you have anything to say, let me hear it at once, or I shall ride off and leave you to your fate."

"Well, sir, the thing is just this, you see:

My sister Sally, my lord, is a very young and very pretty girl—younger than I, please your lordship, by two years—and every one says handsomer by twice also. She is not a giddy or a silly girl either; but the best of us is no match for love betimes; and she coming one day of a message to me at Mr. Hamilton's, though mother never would let her inside the gate, this gentleman and the chap that's just gone happened to pass at the time and saw her: and the upshot was, that the other lad took a fancy to her; and I don't say but Sally might have liked him too, for he's very coaxing in his own French way, sir: and what makes me think Sally liked him is, that when Mr. Vandeleur here came to warn my mother of it, and to keep a strict eye on Sally, Sally cried greatly, sir, and took it very much to heart; and, as I found out afterwards, again from Mr. Vandeleur, that they still saw each other: and it's wonderful, please your lordship, how they do contrive it. I know, if ever I'm in love,

it must be above-board, and in the face of day; for I never should have a head to plan these stolen meetings."

"It is the heart, not the head, man, that plans them," said the marquis, laughing. "But go on."

"Well, then, my lord, I had to speak to her myself, and to take my oath to her, that if it was not dropt that minute, I'd go to Mr. Hamilton, and get young De Brons turned from the school. And what do you think, sir, but after all she managed, I think, to let him know this; for he grew very stiff with me for a while, until all of a sudden he said yesterday he would forgive my unjust suspicions of him—though indeed, sir, I never asked him; and he took me into a room in the evening, and made me drink more than I ever drank before, as he said, to drown all unkindness."

"Then d—me!" exclaimed the serjeant,

now coming forward, “ since that’s the way of it, if I don’t tell the whole truth. I happened to meet this young Frenchman yesterday morning, my lord, about their own grounds, where I went to look at the cricket-match, thinking it a good place to pick up idlers ; and this young man entered into conversation with me about my business, and all that ; and at last he pointed out this here fellow to me,—told me he had a great mind to enlist, only for some wish of not vexing an old mother, and that if I contrived to meet him at night I should have a fine stout soldier for my trouble. I met the lad, drunk to be sure ; but then you know, my lord, as you said yourself, we cannot be too nice in these times : but if I had known how the matter lay, I’d have blown my fingers off before they tendered him the bounty. I saw his sister this morning ; and a lovely beautiful girl she is, my lord—and hung on his neck

crying as if she would have died there ; and it was the hardest job of duty I ever did to tear him away."

"Yet, she seems but a giddy, headstrong girl, even by his own admission," said the marquis, turning to Vandeleur.

"No, indeed, she is not," he answered eagerly ; "if she were, I should almost fear less for her : but she is innocent and confiding, and so young and lovely ; and I have reason to think that this fellow has tried to turn her brain by some jargon of French philosophy, which hitherto the poor girl has withstood ; but if her brother leaves her, he leaves her to destruction. A blind old woman is no protector for such a girl."

"She seems to have another and a more efficient one in you," said the marquis, smiling gently.

"No, my lord," replied the youth, colouring, "I am not, as you are well aware, a fit protector for her, except in an extremity like this."

“ Then, may I ask finally, if this is all pure and disinterested benevolence ; or what makes you so much interested in this young girl ? ”

“ I shall tell you frankly, my lord : it is *not* pure, unmixed benevolence. I feel myself in some degree responsible for the girl’s safety on this occasion, because it was not only I who first brought her brother to Mr. Hamilton’s, but having once seen her by chance, I was struck with her exceeding beauty ; and the fatal day that Henshawe mentions her having come to the gate, I was walking about with this De Brons, and meeting Henshawe running very fast, we asked him where he was going ; he said, to speak to his sister at the gate ; upon which I very giddily, and of course not foreseeing the consequence, proposed to De Brons to go round by another way and see this girl returning, as she was so extremely beautiful. This is the whole story, my lord.”

“ And have you never seen her since ? ”

“Never until this morning, and once or twice at a distance with De Brons. And it is from his own brutal jesting that I suspect what I mentioned of the sophistry with which he is endeavouring to corrupt her principles.”

“Then allow me to shake hands with you, young gentleman,” said the marquis, frankly advancing to him; “and I freely ask your pardon for any distrust I may have shown. But why, instead of proceeding to violence, did you not try the golden key to the serjeant’s heart?”

“I did, my lord; but my stock is but slender, it would not do.”

“I like you not the worse for that acknowledgment. Well, I promise you this matter shall be arranged to your entire satisfaction, and Sally shall be taken care of. I dare say the Henshawes are tenants of mine.”

“We are, indeed, my lord!” exclaimed William.

“Very well. Serjeant, proceed on your way

with your recruit for the present; you have done your duty with propriety and prudence. —Mr. Vandeleur, as I dare say Mr. Hamilton's breakfast-hour is past, you will do me the favour of breakfasting with me. By the bye, you will meet a lady, a namesake of yours, at my house;" and he turned his eyes more fully on the young man as he recollected this circumstance.

Vandeleur looked down with an expressive smile, and a slight colour rose to his cheek.

"What! will you not accept of my invitation, young gentleman?"

"The lady of whom you spoke is—my mother, my lord."

"Your mother, young man!" exclaimed the marquis in much astonishment. "How is it that I never knew of your being so near us?"

The young man smiled ingenuously in the marquis's face, as he replied, "Rather, how should you, my lord?"

"Why did not Mrs. Vandeleur inform me

of it, in order that I might have shown you some attention ?”

“ I rather believe, my lord, it was that she might not encroach on your kindness that she did not mention it.”

“ She is an excellent, noble-minded woman !” exclaimed the marquis ; “ and I am very glad to find, sir, that she has a son worthy of her. But come to breakfast ; I shall enjoy her surprise. And harkye, young gentleman, I think you are too much grown for Mr. Hamilton’s school at present, and a little too fiery withal ; a year or two at a military academy would do you more good ; and if a pair of colours lie in your way, they are yours from this moment ; though some might think that the punishment for endeavouring to deprive a serjeant of his recruit might be better chosen.”

“ Not when I was willing to go myself in his place,” said the young man smiling, and slightly blushing at the Quixotic offer he had made in his desperation. “ But let that convince you,

my lord, that in giving me a commission, you have fulfilled the first wish of my heart." And he gracefully raised his hat as his bright eyes glowed with rapture and enthusiasm.

The marquis caught the infection, and again shook hands with him. " Well, then, you return to Mr. Hamilton's no more;—nay, I insist upon it for my own reasons. Your mother, or my man of business, can settle with him: you must promise me to go there no more. What! you seem annoyed, young man?"

" Oh, my lord, I should be so sorry to deceive you at any time, but particularly at this moment; but indeed I have an engagement that I must keep."

" Well, I guess to what you allude; I heard it muttered between you: but we shall see to that; it can be settled as well anywhere else, and better than near your school. So now I take it as granted that I have your promise."

Still the young man blushed, hesitated, and looked on the ground.

“ Come, come, young gentleman, if I am interfering too much in your concerns, say so at once, and I have done : but I can remain trifling here no longer.”

Vandeleur raised his eyes for a moment full to the marquis's face, as if to read his countenance ; then apparently satisfied with the result, he said frankly, and without removing his eyes from the marquis's, though with a very vivid blush, “ I should like, my lord, to see old Mrs. Henshawe once more, and—and to tell Sally that I was the means of rescuing her brother, and to put her on her guard more fully against De Brons : she might listen to me now.”

The marquis laid his hand kindly on his shoulder : “ She might, and I dare say she would,” he said, smiling; “ yet is the office no fit one for you. Come, do not tarnish the good work you have begun, by letting self creep in. Take this from an old man : it is at the moment we have done a good deed, that we should be most on our guard ; for then we are not only

ready to think we may trust ourselves to any lengths, but even to allow of some little indulgence as a kind of reward. Believe me, you are no more fit to be Sally's adviser or protector, for having protected her from another, than you were before ; and if you would raise no suspicions to the girl's prejudice, after this morning's adventure you will never see her more : I told you she should be taken care of. Come," he said kindly, holding out his hand and smiling, " I really can wait no longer for my breakfast: as we go along you can tell me who this De Brons is."

The young man not only accepted the hand held out to him, but caught and pressed it between both his, until the marquis smiled : he seemed but for very shame inclined to raise it to his lips.

" I like you, my lord, and I like your mode of giving advice ; and if I ever disgrace your recommendation, I hope the last disgrace of the infamous will fall upon me as a punishment."

The marquis was a man of worth and respectability, yet perhaps never, in the long course of his public career, did any eulogium go more home to his heart than this simple effusion of gratitude from the ingenuous and intelligent lips of unsophisticated youth! He returned the pressure of the young man's hand in silence, however; and after they had proceeded a few steps towards the castle of Seaton, he again inquired of young Vandeleur who his foreign companion or antagonist was.

“He is the son of a French nobleman, my lord,” replied Vandeleur, “who fled with his family from France at the time of the revolution; and I suspect De Brons is but a feigned name to suit their present circumstances. He has been for many years at Mr. Hamilton's school, partly to receive his own education, and partly to impart the French accent to the pupils. He is a strange sort of fellow; and between him and a tutor that is there, who fled from France at the same time, though himself,

I believe, a German, some of the wildest doctrines and theories are disseminated through the school. I dislike the Frenchman more than the German, however."

"Is that from *national* or *natural* antipathy?"

"Natural, I think, my lord. One I think only wild and fanciful, the other deep and unprincipled."

"But why does Mr. Hamilton allow such dangerous companions among his pupils?"

"Why, strange to say, after what I have just said, De Brons only seems to have burst forth in this new light since Edelstein has come, which is not long. I don't think Mr. Hamilton is aware of it yet: the German professes to teach chemistry and his own language."

"Well, Mr. Hamilton should be made aware of this. But the time is, I think, at hand when those French *émigrés* can return to their country, and leave our English air unpolluted. *Mais nous voilà arrivés, mon ami.*"

We need not enter the house with them, or dwell on Mrs. Vandeleur's gratified surprise : it is enough to say, that Lord Hampton found means to hush up the quarrel between the young men, without injury to the honour of either, and that a year from that day saw the bright-haired English youth sailing away to join his regiment, then fighting in Italy.

It happened to be exactly the line of life he should have chosen for himself, even if fortune had not presented it to him in such seducing colours as made even his adoring mother feel it her duty to stifle and conceal every selfish pang she experienced upon the subject ; and although, when she left Seaton to meet her boy-soldier in London, and bid him farewell previous to his embarkation, tears certainly did mingle with her blessings, still she commanded herself so as not to suffer the slightest murmur of discontent to escape her lips, but bade him go and prove himself worthy of his patron's favour.

The slight and graceful stripling knelt at her

feet in his new military undress ; and she parted the hair on his forehead, to prolong the sad pleasure she felt in gazing on him such as she knew she never should behold him again.

“ Mother, give me a lock of your hair,” he said, as he felt her fingers twining through his own dark curls.

“ Tush, silly boy ! my hair is not like this ; it is quite grey long since.”

“ And what then, mother ? is it for youth and beauty that sons love their mothers ? Come,” he said, “ the hour is drawing near, mother ;” and snatching a pair of scissors from the table, he himself cut off one of the greyest of the locks she still wore on her temples ; then affectionately kissing the spot he took it from, partly to conceal the emotion that rushed to his eyes at seeing how very grey it was, he rolled it up, while his mother stood wiping away her fast-falling but silent tears.

“ But what shall I do with it now ?” he exclaimed, “ that I may not lose it ? Mother,

I must commit yet another robbery : you must give me that little locket you wear round your neck, until I get a more *gentlemanly* mode of preserving it ;” and he took the ribbon hastily off her neck and threw it over his own.

“ Nay, but, Godfrey,” she exclaimed, “ my little pupil Lady Seaton’s hair is in it.”

“ Well, it shall not stay in it to profane yours—you can get plenty of it ;” and taking it out, he was about to throw it on the ground, when, struck with the beauty and softness of the little ringlet, he said gently, “ Well, it is too pretty to be insulted,” it may remain with yours as you love her so well !”

“ Oh, mother,” he continued, while he fixed the hair into the locket ; “ and so you tell me that Sally Henshawe is married to Sergeant Whitecross. Well, she may thank me for that ; for her own brother’s account of her, that morning that sealed my fate as well as hers, would have gone a short way towards it. Well, I ’m heartily glad of it : how good it was of Lord

Hampton to give her a portion ! and now, mind you, mother, when her first child is born, send her a christening present from me, and I'll repay you with some pretty gew-gaw from the Continent. And now farewell ! God ever bless you !" and the young soldier rushed hastily from the room, and from the house, as if he had not a care at heart, while he was remarked to be the saddest and most silent, for the rest of that day, on board the transport that bore him for the first time from his native country.

CHAPTER V.

Thou 'rt not for me, and I'll lay thee by,
Deep, deep within my heart;
And the world, with its cold and searching eye,
Shall never know where thou art.

Anonymous.

TEN summers, and ten winters, passed over the head of Vandeleur, before he stepped again on English soil. They were, however, literally ten years of "fame and glory."

Those were the days when the metal of every man was tried, and no warlike beating of the young heart, was forced to waste its energy against its own bosom. England was engaged in a struggle which could only have been decided in her favour, by the very flower of her bravest and her wisest. It was much to say, that even amongst them, and against no less

brave and wise antagonists, Godfrey Vandeleur played no unhonoured part. He was at once a brave soldier, and a very few years' experience made him an able leader. More than once, after severe actions, he received the thanks of his commanding officer, and was made honourable mention of in the public despatches.

How beat his mother's heart the while? Proudly?—no; humbly, fearfully, gratefully. She felt that his life was still in the hands of his Creator, and that His mercy alone could preserve it. It was spared, whilst hundreds—thousands, as loved, and perhaps as worthy to be loved, fell around him.—And on the strange termination which, to remote ages, will be analyzed with the deepest interest in the page of history—on the sending of him, who had fought and conquered until his name had gone forth over the earth as something either above or below human nature, to his first sea-girt prison, Godfrey Vandeleur returned to his native country and his widowed mother.

Promotion in such times is rapid; and the smooth-cheeked schoolboy, who left her ten years before an ensign of infantry, was now returned a captain of dragoons. When the struggle broke out on the Peninsula, he had exchanged into a cavalry regiment on service there, and which became as much distinguished by its good conduct as by its heavy losses in the field.

Other changes too he had undergone: the fiery, daring, almost unbroken youth, was tempered into the self-possessed and fashionable man. His joyous temper and animation were indeed in themselves unimpaired; but his intercourse with the world, and its most powerful interests, had taught him to command them and himself.

With the floods of tears, indeed, with which his mother received him to her arms once more, he could not choose but mingle his own for a moment; but in the next he was able to divert her mind from its agitation, by a lively description of whatever he thought would interest her most in his adventures.

"So I perceive, by my cards, that your son has returned, Mrs. Vandeleur?" said Lord Hampton to her one day at dinner.

"Is he indeed returned?" exclaimed his daughter: "why did you not tell me, Mrs. Vandeleur?"

"I did not suppose you remembered him."

"I can scarcely say I do; but you might have given me credit for participating in anything so interesting to you."

"And, as I have not forgotten him," said her father, "I beg, Mrs. Vandeleur, that when he next calls, should I not be so fortunate as to see him myself, you will present my kind regards, and say that I hope to see him at dinner here whenever more agreeable engagements do not interfere. He has indeed done me much credit in my recommendation. I shall not send him formal invitations, as that might limit his visits to them; whereas I really wish to see him *en famille*, and I know he will not stand on ceremony with me."

Mrs. Vandeleur bowed her gratified acknowledgments, while her pupil added, "We dine at home to-morrow, do we not? let him make his *début* then."

"Pray do," said the marquis; and Mrs. Vandeleur promised to be the bearer of the message.

Godfrey Vandeleur inherited all his mother's dignity of mind, or, as it used to be called in the olden time, "*proper pride*." He felt gratified, as she did, at the kindness of Lord Hampton's invitation: he felt it to be an honour; but to render it either a permanent or an advantageous one, he was well aware, depended upon his own manner of receiving it; for he could not forget that, gloss it over as he might, his mother still held a situation which only her own superiority prevented from being looked on as a subordinate one. He did not try to forget it; for he well knew that the sooner he should do so, the sooner would the world think it necessary to remind him of it: nor yet did he feel a wish that she should, for his sake, relinquish a situa-

tion in which he knew her to be permanently happy.

He read it in her letters when he was away, and he saw it in her appearance and whole manner when he came home. He found that the tie was changed between her and Lady Seaton, from governess and pupil, almost to mother and child, and that already it was an understood thing that they never were to separate.


Nor indeed, to a mind like Vandeleur's, would the stigma—if stigma it must be called—have been washed out by a late relinquishing of a situation she had held so long; and could it have been veiled over, he himself would have been the first to withdraw the veil. His nature was particularly frank, and, if the word can be tolerated, *honest*. Disguise of all kinds was so hateful, so troublesome to him, that he preferred the habit of never doing or saying anything that needed it. This he considered the only sure foundation of dignity. Respect *me*, not a phantom of your own creation !

Abroad, indeed, and in scenes where a man's conduct necessarily made his consequence, Vandeleur felt no superior, even in worldly estimation; and, as if such were his native sphere, he was happy, agreeable, lively, and universally courted and admired: but in London, in artificial life, and especially in Lord Hampton's house, he felt the case was altered, nor felt it with vulgar resentment, or affected disdain.

Many years before, he had thought deeply on the subject, and had come to the conclusion that it was, must, perhaps ought to be so; and instead of peevishly declining the opportunity that was now offered to him of at least stepping within "the magic circle," he gladly availed himself of it, only determining to conduct himself therein with such sensitive delicacy as should not leave room to the most haughty to say he had "forgotten himself." Accordingly, when he appeared next day at Lord Hampton's dinner-table, no one could have traced in the cold, reserved, silent, but perfectly self-possessed gen-

tleman, the lively, warm-hearted, energetic, and talented soldier, the spirit at once of the battlefield and of the foreign coterie. Lady Seaton kindly addressed herself to him several times; but as they sat at opposite sides of the table, their conversation was necessarily limited to a few short observations, and he did not seem anxious to prolong it.

He did not return to the drawing-room that evening, and Lord Hampton's invitation was specially repeated before he appeared again. But again and again he did appear, and still remained apparently cold, silent, and reserved. Happily, however, there was something so bland and polished in his manner, while uttering a casual, and unavoidable observation or reply

 Lady Seaton, or her father, as caused every one to feel that there was "something in him:" still, as it seemed hopelessly shut up there, he was on the very point of being set down for ever as "a bore," when one day it so happened that two or three young men, who had just shown

themselves long enough in lancer caps and hussar jackets to add regimental rank to that which they inherited by courtesy from their fathers, met together at dinner at Lord Hampton's. After the ladies had retired, a trifling matter of dispute arose between them, which by degrees grew into a warm debate ; and as it seemed very unlikely to come to a favourable issue, the subject being a parallel between a late action on the Continent, at which neither had been present, and one of Marlborough's battles in Flanders, which neither of them appeared to remember very distinctly, Lord Hampton thought it time to make a diversion by saying, —“ If you seek to be convinced, gentlemen, I dare say Mr. Vandeleur can state the exact merits of the case, as he commanded a company, I think, at one of the actions you speak of; and, I'll be bound, knows just as accurately every particular that is related of that to which you would compare it.”

Vandeleur, thus appealed to, turned at once

from the gentleman next him, with whom he had purposely entered into conversation to avoid the awkward position of a listener to a warm dispute ; and by his clear, prompt, and explicit answer, not only proved that not a word had been lost upon him, but that the decision he gave was a judicious and enlightened one. Fortunately for him, it so happened that neither of the disputants had been right ; therefore they readily granted to each other that neither could have been wrong, and Godfrey was hailed by both as a “ most upright judge.”

But his triumph ended not here. The conversation was continued ; and as just enough of the late feelings remained, to make each of the young noblemen prefer making him the common conductor of their opposite currents, he was of necessity completely drawn into it. It was not in his *system*, still less in his *nature*, churlishly to resist any overtures made to him ; and not only did he contrive adroitly to neutralize their conflicting opinions, but even to make one pass

over to the other, and by degrees he found himself the only speaker in the room.

Every one present was attracted by Lord Hampton's appeal to him ; and though they were too polite to appear to observe it, their attention was more or less arrested ; and presently each person—and there were some of distinguished talent as well as rank—found himself listening with pleasure and interest to Vandeleur's animated and graphic descriptions of the struggles in which he had so lately borne his part, and which had succeeded in leaving *them* free to enjoy the luxuries of their splendid homes.

“Come up to the ladies,” said Lord V. as soon as the conversation ceased. He was one of the late disputants, who had worn brilliant regimentals for a season, in the hopes of having to tell of deeds of arms himself, little suspecting that his noble parents had been successfully exerting their interest to prevent it.

“No,” replied Vandeleur, “I cannot. I am engaged for this evening.”

“Pho ! so am I ; but I shall not think of it for three hours to come.”

“But I am going to the opera, I believe,” said Vandeleur, still hesitating.

“There is nothing worth going there for to-night. Come up and hear Lady Seaton’s music for this evening, and let us go together to-morrow night.”

Vandeleur yielded ; and here was formed the first link of a chain which every day increased in length, and soon bound him to society in golden fetters.

It was not in human nature, still less in the frank and manly nature of Vandeleur, to distrust or to resist the flattering attentions he now received. He began to think that it was even due to Lord Hampton, that he should make all the recompense he could in return for them ; and accordingly throwing aside at once the cold, and to him unnatural and irksome reserve, in which he had wrapped himself at first, he gave way to his own animated and joyous spirits, and was soon considered as an acquisition wherever he

appeared. Nay, such is the caprice of fashion, that when once the circumstance of his mother's situation was partially forgiven, the other extreme was adopted, and it was now declared to enhance the interest with which it was their pleasure already to invest him ; and the dispute at Lord Hampton's dinner-table, which he had adjusted with so much success, though almost professional, gave a tone to the opinions that began to circulate in his favour. Fortunately, though not deeply read, his natural endowments, and such advantages as had been afforded him, together with strong volition, enabled him to support the part thus thrust upon him ; and presently not only were his lively repartees, and playful bons-mots, repeated in the most elevated circles, but " the unlettered soldier " was generally the one appealed to in any light literary dispute amongst ladies, or when any point requiring accurate recollection was discussed amongst gentlemen. It is not intended to assert that, in such cases, Godfrey Vandeleur's

memory, or even information, never was at fault; but even when it proved so, his happy talent of supplying the deficiency with some *jeu d'esprit* of his own, or his eager search for the book which contained the passage in dispute, and his animated comments upon it, not only procured him forgiveness, where prepossession was already, albeit almost accidentally, so strong, but caused the task imposed, not seldom, to be considered "more honoured in the breach than in the observance." It need scarcely be added, that a very handsome person, and graceful address, contributed their share to this unexpected success.

There was one individual, and one only, with whom his intimacy, instead of increasing from the time of his first introduction, seemed latterly rather to decline.—Strange to say, that one was his mother's pupil!

Lady Seaton was at this time only twenty years of age. Her mind and character, however,

were fully developed ; and the native loftiness of her temper, and sense of her own situation, though mellowed by courteous manners, and gentle, amiable feelings, threw around her an air of dignity and reserve, which caused her to be, by common acquaintances, more generally admired and respected, than approached with any warmer, or more familiar feeling. The treasure of her love, or even of her friendship, was one, which, by the casual observer, was either believed to be as fabulous as the ring of Solyman—or, if it existed, to be almost as far beyond the reach of the most aspiring ; while her reception of the addresses of the few whom her beauty and splendid advantages had tempted to brave all this, did not tend to dissipate the idea. Not one of them had interested her feelings, or those of her father, sufficiently to induce her to think for a moment of leaving her happy home, or him to urge it.

When Godfrey Vandeleur was first presented to her, she received him with cordiality, and

almost friendly familiarity of manner, as the son of her beloved friend; which, if it did not of itself succeed in beguiling him from the cautious reserve he had imposed upon himself, certainly was not without its effect upon his feelings. But, as if his success in society, for his mother's sake, was the sole object she had in view; no sooner did that success appear to be ensured, than her manner to him became less distinguished in its kindness; and though now almost every evening meeting him in society, the brilliant and encouraging smile, which was ever ready to point applause to his first contributions to the game of fashionable conversation, was now scarcely ever vouchsafed, though ever eagerly sought; or if accidentally elicited, was latterly followed by a hasty blush:—that blush was never confined to her own cheek!

By one so deeply interested as was Mrs. Vandeleur, this change could not fail to be perceived; but she perceived it not only without resentment, but seemed to appreciate the pro-

priety from whence she believed it to proceed ; and, as if by mutual but tacit consent, her son's name was now scarcely ever mentioned between her and her pupil. The young man himself, whatever his feelings on the subject might be, scrupulously studied to suit his deportment to Lady Seaton's wishes ; and though his eye might occasionally glance furtively to see if *she listened* when others *applauded*, his conversation was now scarcely ever addressed exclusively to her, even when he availed himself of Lord Hampton's constant invitations.

“ What a handsome and agreeable man that Captain Vandeleur is, and seems to be ! ” observed Lady Augusta Starling one evening, as she and Lady Seaton came together up stairs, from the dining-room at Lord Hampton's, just after Lady Augusta's arrival in town for the season. “ Who is he ? or where is he fallen from ? ”

“ He is son to *my* Mrs. Vandeleur, and he has just *risen* from the campaigns on the Continent.”

“ How risen ? Was he in the ranks ? ”

Lady Seaton coloured. “ No ; I said he was son to Mrs. Vandeleur : he is of an ancient and respectable family, but he is risen in worldly honour and estimation.”

“ What, then, is he a hero ? ”

“ How you run, as ever, from one extreme to another ! No, not a hero, but a very brave and gallant officer, who has distinguished himself, and been frequently mentioned in the despatches home.”

“ Oh, that’s his label, is it ? Is he horse or foot ? ”

“ Horse ; the —th Dragoons.”

“ Oh, then he really is presentable, and perhaps an acquisition ? ”

“ I hope so.”

“ Nay, you know you are not responsible for every one who dines at your table being an acquisition—especially people that you cannot avoid asking.”

“ I think I am, whenever many meet there :

it is only on *very* particular *friends* that we inflict bores, when we are sure of their being treated at least with respect."

"Nay, Lady Seaton, you hit as hard as if I had said Captain Vandeleur was a bore, instead of an acquisition."

"I never give any one credit for a lucky *escape*, nor take it myself."

"Well, I know there's no arguing with you ; but will you ask him to join our riding-party to-morrow, and I shall take him to task, and, if I find him all right, shall patronise him : will you ?"

"No."

"Why ?"

"Because I have never done so, and I don't think he would come."

"Not come !—not come at the call of beauty ! Then is he no true son of Mars !"

"He has at least done all I require of him as such, and, I believe, quite enough to dispense with our patronage."

“ Really ? Then you are serious that he is already one of *us* ? ”

“ As much so as you or I can make him, at least.”

“ Then he is to be petted, instead of patronised ? ”

“ *C'est selon.* ”

“ Nay, you are so very proper, and so mysterious absolutely, that I must have recourse to himself to find out what he is.”

“ More than a very handsome, and very agreeable young man, which you have yourself pronounced him ; and a good, and brave officer, which I have told you he is.”

“ Oh, dear, yes ! a thousand things more ! That is all merely surface ; the one for ladies in general, the other for gentlemen in general. Now I want to see what he is for *one*.”

“ That is, for Lady Augusta Starling ? Well, I hope he may be as successful as with the others.”

When Vandeleur came up to the drawing-

room, Lady Augusta Starling was at the piano, accompanying Lady Seaton's harp. Being extremely fond of music, he came over almost immediately to the instrument, and Lady Augusta soon found occasion to employ him upon several little commissions, for music, harp-strings, and so forth; and finally, as soon as the duet was over, she quickly turned round and led him into conversation. At first, Vandeleur, was as usual, distant and reserved; but as the giddy girl fluttered on, he was obliged to follow.

"I dare say now, as you seem a grave and reserved person, that you would rather I had suffered the music to continue, than break it off for conversation: you seem to enjoy music greatly?"

"I do; but only for the soul and feelings it breathes forth; conversation may have the same charm."

"I trust you are not sentimental?"

"Why?"

"Because, in that event, we had better become honourable enemies at once—easier characters to sustain, in general, than swearing an eternal friendship. I never could talk sentiment."

"Nor listen to it?"

"Nor listen to it," she repeated, quickly looking round on him with some astonishment.

"I assure you, nor I. So now as we are agreed in this, and as peace is such a novelty at present, I hope you will not be the first to break it."

"Oh, apropos of peace and war, I understand you are quite a hero."

Vandeleur bowed with mock gravity to the compliment.

"But is it true?"

"Before I answer, I must know from you what constitutes a hero."

"Oh, if you know not that, it is evident that you are none. I am answered already."

"On the contrary, the wise ones say we never know ourselves."

"Well, then, a hero means a very brave, a very noble, and a very generous man."

"I fear you have left out the chief ingredient."

"What is that?"

"To be a fortunate one. Now I should define a hero a first-rate actor, whose part is well cast, on a suitable stage."

"Do you mean to say that heroism is only acting?"

"I do; but it is acting up to nature. How many hundreds, with all the ingredients of heroism that ever filled the breast of Scipio, have gone down unhonoured to their graves for want of the requisites I mentioned! A man's becoming a hero depends as much on others as on himself. It was Bonaparte made Wellington a hero."

"What am I to gather from all this?—that you would have been a hero if opportunity had been afforded you?"

“No. In such times as we have had, the stage was so extensive that every man might choose his own part; and as I had all the requisites that *I* named, we must only suppose that I was not up to hero-pitch in some of those named by you. There was nothing in Bonaparte’s birth or circumstances to favour his becoming one: but the stage was decked, the *dramatis personæ* ready to support him; he stepped forward and did his part nobly.”

“Can you say that, after all?”

“I can. I never saw Bonaparte—that, as it were, materialized mind—without a feeling of reverence, that, true Englishman as I am, I was obliged to do double duty to clear my conscience of. But I observe that Lady Seaton has been looking towards you more than once as if she wished to speak with you.”

“How can you see so far across this great room? But do try, will you?—Thank you.”

Vandeleur approached Lady Seaton, and

certainly felt rather awkward and officious, when she coldly answered, "No : I only looked to see whether she was waiting to play a particular duet with me, which she requested me not to forget this evening."

Vandeleur repeated these words to Lady Augusta. "Oh, then, of course I must play it. *Adieu, mon héros—au revoir :*" and turning again to the piano, the music recommenced.

Vandeleur met Lady Augusta Starling the next evening, and the next ; and on the morning of the fourth, her brother, Lord Cranberry, called on him and invited him to dinner. Lady Augusta had made it a point to represent him as the pet of the Hamptons ; "a most extraordinary fine young man, a hero, and very clever—and a lion to boot."

Vandeleur declined the invitation. Each time that he had met Lady Augusta, she had condescended to renew her familiar chatting with him, and rather to prolong it more and

more ; and although he was bound to follow as she led, still his good sense told him he was now treading on slippery ground, and that, all charmed as he was by his new sphere in life, it might only be for a season he was permitted to enjoy it. He felt the attentions he received to be a most delicious draught, and even permitted his spirits and feelings to be a good deal elevated by it ; but he had no mind to suffer them to become so intoxicated as either to cause him to be chased from that sphere as a presumptuous fool, or to pay for it the penalty of a broken heart. Accordingly, though many young fashionables now honoured him with "wreathed smiles," and though to gentlemen he had a good deal relaxed, he still continued reserved and distant to ladies, and observed one invariable rule—never to ask any of them to dance.

It was while matters were in this train that Colonel and Mrs. Malcolm arrived in London. He was the colonel of Vandeleur's first regi-

ment, and had ever since been in habits of intimacy with him. He had formerly been an acquaintance of Lord Hampton's, and Vandeleur met him and his lady at dinner there shortly after their arrival.

His reception by Colonel Malcolm did not serve to lessen the respect in which he was already held, while his meeting with the lady served to show that the reserve he thought proper to assume in general, could be laid aside at pleasure. To her he was attentive, kind, and even assiduous; while in her manner towards him there was something that partook of subdued respect, and even tender gratitude.

Colonel Malcolm, who was a sensible, gentlemanly man, and twenty years older than his pretty wife, seemed not only to understand, but even to appreciate and value, Vandeleur's attentions to her. The most cynical and censorious could therefore do no more than view it as a matter of curiosity,—and, truth to tell, the kindest and best did no less.

Vandeleur's star was still in the ascendant; and this circumstance only tended to swell the tide of his popularity still higher, by investing him with a degree of mystery which perhaps alone was wanting to complete the *engouement* that he created. None, however, were ever destined to be enlightened on the subject. Whatever the feeling or bond between the parties was, it was evident that Vandeleur was the benefactor, they the obliged—and *that* in some matter too delicate for common conversation.

All that ever transpired, if indeed it could be called anything, was one evening that Vandeleur excited the astonishment, and it is scarcely too much to say *envy*, of his fair young friends, by dancing a quadrille with Mrs. Malcolm.

As he restored her to the side of her husband, and was sauntering to another part of the room, Lady Seaton, whose partner had gone in search of her shawl, congratulated him on having broken the ice.

“It is not broken,” he replied playfully.

“ One single measure, which I took care to tread so lightly, has not broken it, else you had seen me ‘ borne down by the flying ;’ whereas I trust to resume the grave dignity of my deportment with double force.”

“ Oh !” exclaimed Lady Augusta Starling, who just then paused in the dance, close to where Lady Seaton and Vandeleur stood, “ are you not shocked to find what a coward Captain Vandeleur has turned out after all, Lady Seaton ? He is absolutely afraid to dance !”

“ Afraid of what ?”

“ Will you, pray, repeat to Lady Seaton all that you said to me the other day, as your reason for not dancing ?—about becoming too well acquainted with dangerously-charming creatures, and all that pretty nonsense about Cupid’s arrows being too fine to fly far ; and therefore, that while you keep at a certain distance, you are safe, &c. &c.—a bad compliment, by the bye, to those whom you honour with your attention : and, upon my word, now I think on’t, *I* ought

to be offended, for people say you talk to me more than to any other lady."

Vandeleur and Lady Seaton, for the first time in their lives, irresistibly exchanged a momentary glance full of meaning, and each looked down to conceal an involuntary smile. But how different was the expression of the countenance of each next moment, when Lady Augusta continued—

"And you, Lady Seaton, ought to be flattered, for I think you and he do not get on at all."

Their eyes, which had again met, were now instantly, as it were, again shot asunder, and once more fastened on the ground, while a vivid and conscious blush suffused the countenances of each. Happily Lady Augusta was at that moment drawn away by her partner; and as Vandeleur saw the gentleman whom Lady Seaton had despatched for her shawl returning with it, he just lingered to say, "I danced with Mrs. Malcolm because she is a strange

here,—because I knew it would be acceptable, —and, more than all, because it would grieve me excessively, both for her sake and that of her excellent husband, that so innocent and amiable a person should have cause to feel herself neglected.”

It was enough: from that hour Mrs. Malcolm, during her stay in London, found herself supported in society by the leading star of fashionable life.

CHAPTER VI.

Yet there was light around her brow,
A holiness in those dark eyes,
Which show'd, though wandering earthward now,
Her spirit's home was in the skies.
Yes ! for a spirit pure as hers
Is always pure, even while it errs ;
As sunshine, broken in the rill,
Though turn'd astray, is sunshine still.

MOORE.

SPRING wore on. Lord Hampton and his family, with a select party of friends, prepared to remove for the Easter recess to one of his mansions in the country.

"You will accompany us, Vandeleur?" he said one day at dinner, as the matter was talked over.

Vandeleur hastily declined it.

"Why?" said Lord Hampton. And the

simple monosyllable was more confounding than any elaborate speech could have been; at least, it left him less time to frame an answer, and it suggested none itself. He stammered and looked distressed, then laughed at his own dilemma.

“Nay,” said Lord Hampton, smiling also, “if there is any ‘*business of importance*’ to detain you here, I am not the man to urge you to play truant: if not, let’s see you, that’s all.”

There was something in Lord Hampton’s smile that told plainly what the ‘business of importance’ was to which he alluded; and there was something in the young man’s feelings at the moment that irresistibly impelled him not only to disclaim all such engagements, but, in order to free himself completely from the imputation, unequivocally, and without regard to the apparent inconsistency, to accept Lord Hampton’s invitation.

He had no sooner uttered words to that effect, than his eye almost involuntarily asked how Lady Seaton was pleased at the circum-

stance : hers happened to be fixed on him at the moment with an expression of deep inquiry ; but on meeting his, she covered a slight degree of confusion in a graceful bow, as it were of acceptance of his promise to join their party. He could not ascertain whether she was glad or sorry.

Nor here let rustic though well-meaning parents, whose hopes suggest a lover in every "unmarried man" who approaches the seclusion in which they and their promising progeny are immured, exclaim, "How imprudent of Lord Hampton !" The Countess of Seaton had from her very birth been surrounded by the "choice spirits" of her age and sphere ; and the low-bred precaution of guarding her heart against their enchantments, no more entered into the head of her aristocratic father, than it did into the precepts of her refined and high-minded governess.

"And we have got another acquisition to our party, Theodosia," continued Lord Hampton. "The Duke of Castleton is just arrived from

the Continent, and has promised to join us in a few days. You are aware that his father was a particular friend and near neighbour of mine in ——shire: our estates there adjoin each other."

Lady Seaton bowed her head in silence, and the conversation turned to other subjects. In fact, this was one which was not quite agreeable to Lady Seaton. The young nobleman to whom Lord Hampton alluded, and whose return to London, after an absence of several years, was an event of considerable interest in the fashionable world, was one of England's wealthiest subjects; and whether it was from the old intimacy between Lord Hampton and the late duke, or whether from the general apparent suitability of the alliance—or whether, as is most probable, from both these causes together, not only Lady Seaton's immediate friends, but several others, looked upon that alliance as an event very likely to take place. She had, it could scarcely be said how, heard the whisper; and to one of her lofty and inde-

pendent spirit it was anything but an acceptable one.

The duke was young, handsome, and said to be agreeable ; but two days' domestication with him in the country served to convince Lady Seaton, that as his mind was of a very mediocre grade, and his character a negative one, he was not more of the latter than was absolutely unavoidable from his great advantages, and residence for some years in foreign courts ; while even those who were more predisposed in his favour, were not unfrequently surprised to find themselves turning from his insipid, but courtly compliments, to the half-concealed, but never bitter raillery, of Godfrey Vandeleur.

When first the little party congregated at Lord Hampton's villa, Vandeleur felt a degree of awkwardness at being associated so closely with Lady Seaton, the anticipation of which alone had been sufficient to suggest his refusal to join the party. But it would have been totally inconsistent with her high breeding, and real dignity of mind, to suffer this to continue.

From the moment that her father had prevailed with him to make one in so small and so select a party in their own house, she felt that all private or especial reserve on her part must give way ; and that where each guest depended so much upon the other, it would be equally uncourteous, and unfair, either to throw a damp upon his agreeability, or to avail herself of it without the least return.

Vandeleur instantly felt the change in her manner, and was not only alive to its effect, but to its cause. His own delicacy of feeling enabled him to sympathise in hers ; and instead of peevishly or indecorously resenting her former reserve, he now determined to avail himself of the relaxation just as far as might meet her views, and no farther.

Like the attendants in the fairy tale, he endeavoured to anticipate her every wish, yet to conceal the hand that ministered to it ; and thus was unconsciously and tacitly established between them a sweet, subtile, but dangerous, because unacknowledged, sympathy.

In the riding parties, from which he could no longer be excluded, Vandeleur apparently neither sought nor avoided her side; and although when any laughing appeal from her, or other accidental circumstance, called him there, it generally so happened that he kept the place until the ride was over, yet the evening never seemed to cement the intimacy. He approached not the harp or piano when she played, and was, on the contrary, generally deeply engaged in some different entertainment with others of the party.

Thus matters wore on, when one hopelessly wet day set the whole party at their wits' ends to devise some agreeable mode of getting through it. The usual resources of a country-house were tried; but as the season, on the whole, had been a wet one, none of these retained the charm of novelty; they were therefore soon cast aside, and as the party was a social and well-selected one, the anxiety became general to strike out some amusement which should engage them all, and not suffer .

the gentlemen to pair off to the billiard-room, or chess and backgammon tables.

At last some one suggested that every gentleman should repair to the conservatory, and choosing some flower there, present it, with an appropriate original inscription, written with a pencil on a band of white ribbon, to the lady of his choice, which she in return was bound to wear at dinner, the flower in her hair, the band of ribbon as a bracelet on her arm. To this there were at first some dissenting voices; but when a few amendments had been adopted, it was finally carried. One of the amendments was, that, in order to spare the gentlemen all gentle confusion, the addresses should be written in feigned hands and presented anonymously; and in order to avoid all chance of detection, a basket was to be left in the conservatory, into which they were to be promiscuously thrown, and from whence Lady Seaton's maid was to take and distribute them according to their different directions, whilst the ladies dressed for dinner.

It is necessary that a young, gay, and idle party should be hopelessly shut up by bad weather in a country-house, where they had assembled for amusement, in order to understand the avidity with which this little scheme was now hailed, and the merriment excited by the sombre countenances of the gentlemen, as, seated at the various tables in the drawing-room, they endeavoured to conjure verses out of their brains, by the very dint, it would seem, of frowns and contortions.

It was simultaneously voted and agreed that the ladies should retire, as their unfeeling mirth only served to distract them more. This, after all, was no unacceptable decree; for not only is laughing long at the same thing tiresome in itself, but the humid atmosphere had weighed so heavily on their silken tresses, as to warn them by many a *touching appeal to their eyes*, that it would require more time than usual, to put them into a state worthy the blushing honours that were preparing for them with so much labour; and, indeed, one or two had already

slyly slipped away, after a stolen glance at a mirror, to see how her face bore the careless pushing of her drooping ringlets behind her ears. A careless toilette reads well, but somehow few can bear it.

A very few minutes after the ladies had retired, the Duke of Castleton left his seat, and went over to the table where Vandeleur sat a little apart, engaged, pen in hand, like the rest; but not like the rest, taking fresh ink into his pen between every extorted word, as if the genius lay in the ink itself: on the contrary, having undertaken to write a couplet, his pen flowed on with a facility in which he had not indulged since the days of his boyhood.

"Come, Vandeleur," said the duke, "be charitable. I never wrote a line of poetry in all my life, and I see they drop from your pen even without an effort. Do, like a good fellow, write a couplet for me. Why, bless me! you have already enough there to serve a dozen. You cannot cram all those upon a bracelet;

it must be a *sash*, and that you cannot present to a lady: so, do be generous, and give me a stanza or two out of these—those you reject will do for me.”

“But suppose, my lord, they will only suit one object?”

“Then are they no love verses; for the feeling is all that is ever described when we think we are describing the individual, and that is alike in all. Did you ever show lines upon love to any lady in your life who did not in some way betray that she thought them particularly applicable to herself? just as natural characters in a novel are said to be personal. Upon my soul, I once knew a girl who answered lines she read in a newspaper, under the firm persuasion that her lover or beloved had adopted that mode of communicating his feelings; they were, she said, so exactly applicable, though he was not only in India at the time, but had never written two lines of verse in his life. Some one, to humour the joke, replied to hers; and, the sentiments being

still his, she appointed a meeting, and ultimately, to save her character, became the wretched wife of a talented shoemaker ! But come," he added in a low voice, and with a slight degree of hesitation, " I don't care if I tell you, that I think it but right to present *my* offering to Lady Seaton : will your verses at all apply to *her* ?"

" You may judge for yourself, my lord. You may have these lines, and if you can pick out any that suit you, you are welcome to them ; only remember your own principle, that the feeling is alike *in* all and *to* all." And so saying, he handed to the duke the following lines, and left the room.

Oh, pardon that thou hearest from me
The wailings of a hopeless flame ;
Henceforth I shall not be to thee
An object of thy praise or blame.
Then do not deem each mournful line
A vain attempt thy breast to move ;
I would but soothe the pain of mine,
By murmuring—how much I love !
I would but bid a last farewell,
To one, though late, too dearly known,
Ere I take up my staff and shell
To wander through the world alone.

Thou wert to me a lovely star,
The empress of my wayward will,
And though too high, too bright, too far
For me to hope, I loved thee still.
I did not *hope*—yet had a dream
That fame might make me worthy thee ;
And then, how proudly did I deem
No task too high, too hard for me !
That star I worshipp'd as my guide,
I own'd no other guide but thee ;
I follow'd—but thou didst abide
Above no Bethlehem for me !

As soon as the company began to assemble in the drawing-room before dinner, a judge was appointed, who, seated in all the dignity of a music-stool, was to have the privilege of taking each fair lady by the hand, reading aloud the inscription which its ribbon bore, and pronouncing judgment as to how far the lines suited the flower selected. Of their *originality* all doubt vanished according as they appeared !

Lady Augusta Starling entered the room first, her auburn curls bound with a wreath of roses, and on her wrist she bore the following lines :

Fair Rose ! since not Apollo's lyre could now
Give one new strain in which thy praise to speak,
Go twine thyself on fair Augusta's brow,
And guess thy beauty from her blushing cheek.

"Why, this is an address to the rose, and not to the lady !" said Lord Hampton, who was appointed judge, as retributive justice for his having pleaded the 'Easter holidays,' in the forenoon, as an exemption for himself, and one or two other "steady senators," from all extra exercise of the brains.

"Oh, never mind," exclaimed Lady Augusta ;
"trust me, there is no sweeter compliment than that paid through a rival beauty."

Another fair creature entered. She held a blue hyacinth in her hand ; she wore on her arm its application :

Thrice happy flower ! the Lily or the Rose
May each one emblematic grace disclose ;
Whilst thou dost two of Emma's charms declare —
Her eyes of blue, and *hyacinthine* hair.

"Humph ! I did not know that puns were admitted."

"Oh yes, when they are superadded gratis."

“ Very well ; pass on.”

A third came, with a bunch of lily-of-the-valley.

Fair *belle*, though here no humble valley smiles,
Thy native sweetness still our hearts beguiles ; —
Like her who, nurtured in the highest sphere,
Boasts all that makes the cottage maiden dear.

“ And what may that be ? for in all my long life I never yet could find out that a cottage maiden was *better* than a *pis-aller*.”

“ Hold ! hold ! ” exclaimed two or three together ; “ a forfeit ! Lord Hampton is invading our privileges, and punning.”

“ I think it was much more like an Irish bull : however, if you choose to ‘ make the *worse* appear the *better* reason,’ I’m sure I have no objection, and will at any time gladly pay a forfeit for a witticism——of my own ! But about this pretty young lady who, in my mind, has been so injuriously compared to a cottage maid ? ”

“ Oh, you inexorable judge ! of course it only means artlessness and simplicity, and so forth.”

“Heigh-ho ! I do wish people would learn to distinguish between simplicity and ignorance, vulgarity and artlessness. But pass on, fair girl ; you are in no danger of confounding them. Hah !—what have we here ? A new species of geranium, which I have never seen before. Will the motto tell its name ?”

Blushing and beautiful, the charming girl who wore it, held up her arm. She was the affianced bride of a young nobleman, whom some accidental circumstance prevented from being of the party at the moment ; but as the circumstance of their betrothment was no longer a secret, some one had in his absence selected the species of geranium then recently obtained, and called by his name, and addressed it to the lady with these lines :

The time is past to sing thy beauties o'er ;
These let them sing whose fate denies them more.
But let this flower my fondest hopes combine ;
It bears my name—my Laura, make it thine !

The judge was touched with the graceful good humour, and good breeding, of the lovely

fiancée, and respectfully raising her hand to his lips, he handed her on without uttering an observation.

One or two more succeeded, and then there was a pause—a pause for the mistress of the revels. Presently she entered, but with a countenance whose flushed colour, and bashful expression, but ill accorded with the laughing hilarity of the moment, wherein each fair lady was expected to receive her offering as a mere *jeu d'esprit*, and not at all *dal cuore*.

Lady Seaton looked particularly lovely, and it was perceived that her fair ringlets were closely enwreathed with—the dark passion-flower. She hesitated to advance to her father, and one or two of her young companions impatiently seized her hands, as if expecting to find in the charmed motto the secret of her surpassing beauty. If so, they were driven to despair; for there was neither verse nor motto, and she wore the white band pure and unsullied.

“How’s this! how is this?” exclaimed the

judge, to whom she was now handed up. "A forfeit ! a forfeit from Lady Seaton !"

"I was not aware, my lord judge," she said, "that we were liable to be fined for the want of taste of others, in not deeming us worthy of an address : methinks the slight is in itself punishment enough."

"Nay, fair lady, that humble apology will not serve your turn : he who presented you with that expressive emblem of *crossed** love never deemed you unworthy of a verse.

"But," exclaimed Lady Augusta Starling, "may it not be the other way—the other way? May he not have deemed her above all common modes of communication, and left that melancholy flower to tell its own tale, on the principle that—

' Silence in love betrays more woe
Than words, tho' e'er so witty ;
As beggars that are dumb, you know,
May challenge double pity.'

* It is scarcely necessary to remind the reader that the passion-flower is marked with a cross, from whence it is said to take its name.

Indeed, if he had had his wits about him, he would have given in these lines with the flower, to explain his silence."

"If he had been an Irishman, I dare say he might," said Lady Seaton.

"Yes, yes, but all these ifs, might, and perhaps will not do," interposed the judge; "we must have Lady Seaton's forfeit, or some good reason against it."

"Ask her," said the Duke of Castleton, "if she received no other flower with an address; and if so, why she declined to wear it."

"Is it as a forfeit, my lord?" she said, turning to him with a slight blush, "that you would compel me to hurt the vanity of some well-meaning swain, who fancied he was paying me a compliment, by forcing me to tell him how unacceptable it was?"

"I am answered, and rebuked," said the duke, with a greater appearance of mortification than the matter seemed to call for: so much, indeed, that Lady Augusta whispered in his

ear, "I think, my lord, that amounted to '*a contempt of court*'—Need I finish the word?"

"Come, duke," said Lord Hampton with a smile, "come; as this ill-omened flower has not only defrauded Lady Seaton of an expected *address*, but almost deprived her of *her own*, we must only take for granted that she wears it as emblematic of *passion* indeed, but of a kind the very reverse of that it was meant to express. And now, good people, 'to dinner with what appetites we may.'"

It was utterly impossible that Lord Hampton could have formed the most distant guess at who, amongst so many, might have presented the passion-flower to Lady Seaton. She was aware of this, and could therefore only attribute to one cause, the slight degree of annoyance that to her, if to no one else, was perfectly visible under the smile which he had assumed in uttering these words. This conviction did not tend to restore her composure, and threw an unconscious gloom over the whole procedure, which made every one feel it had gone far enough.

Under this impression, the subject was only once again alluded to, and that was by the duke himself, who, as he sat next to Lady Seaton at dinner, literally seemed unable to detach his eyes from the dark wreath which certainly did contrast most beautifully with her blonde complexion and hair. "Well, I envy, but cannot guess, who selected that flower," he said. "I can make some guess at nearly all the others, but not the least at the silent swain whose offering is so honoured; and the worst of the matter is, that, upon my soul!" he said, laughing, "I tried to get at that flower myself, but it was so deuced high I could not reach it. *He* must be a tall fellow."

Lady Seaton instantly repeated, as it were musingly, but quite distinctly, the line,

"Fain would I climb, but fear to fall."

"Yes! finish the couplet, as Queen Elizabeth did," exclaimed the duke.

"Why, my lord? it could not in the least apply to *you*, you know."

And it did not: but there was one brown

cheek opposite to her at dinner which became deadly pale when he caught the line. A glass of sherry however, hastily swallowed, set all to rights, and his emotion passed off undiscovered.

When the time came for Lord Hampton and his family to return to London, Vandeleur at once determined within himself to spare Lady Seaton the ungracious task (should she again deem it a necessary one) of withdrawing from him the intimacy with which she had honoured him in the country. Accordingly, for some time his visits were much less frequent than might have been expected. Lord Hampton remarked it; and once more, with an expressive smile, hoped he was employing his leave of absence to some advantage.

Vandeleur looked graver than when last the hint was conveyed, and his eye sought not Lady Seaton's this time; it would not have met it if it had: but his mother, who was present at the moment, suffered hers to glance furtively, and anxiously, from one to the other.

That lady had for some days past manifested a dejection of spirits, and a sort of dissatisfied manner, very unlike her usual placidity, and dignified deportment. On the evening before this observation of Lord Hampton's, Lady Seaton, finding her sitting apparently in deep and unpleasing meditation, in a saloon formerly appropriated to their studies, took a seat beside her, and kindly taking her hand, inquired what had occurred to annoy her.

Mrs. Vandeleur instantly replied, "I scarcely know if I ought to trouble you with it, my love ; but there is a matter which causes me a good deal of anxiety."

"My dear Mrs. Vandeleur, is it any matter in which my father or I can assist you?"

"No, dearest Lady Seaton, it is not : it merely relates to Godfrey's marriage :" and she raised her eyes to her pupil's face.

It was instantly dyed with a deep and burning blush. As rapid blushes were, however, an essential part of Lady Seaton's beauty, it might,

she hoped, betoken nothing more than surprise ; and the paleness which certainly succeeded she was willing to attribute to the mere reaction of the eloquent blood. As Lady Seaton seemed not about to make any observation, Mrs. Vandeleur continued : “ A near relative of my late husband, a man of much respectability, and even immense wealth, acquired in mercantile pursuits, has taken an uncommon fancy to Godfrey, and has had him a great deal at his house. One of his daughters, a very pretty pleasing girl,—and, I assure you, Lady Seaton, lady-like and accomplished,—has beheld him with still more partial eyes. She is her father’s favourite child ; and, in short, such overtures have been made to him, chiefly through me, as might be acceptable to a nobleman. They satisfy their own feelings in all this, by affecting to think that his want of fortune may deter him from coming forward, and yet render so very large a one as they offer, necessary to him. But, I lament to say, he will not even hear me on the subject.”

Another rapid blush, but without the succeeding paleness, was the only answer Mrs. Vandeleur still received from her attentive pupil. She therefore continued : " It is a matter of great regret to me ; because, besides the young lady herself being really everything I could wish, and even, as I said before, remarkably pretty, the noble fortune which her father is willing to settle on her, would place Godfrey at once far beyond anything he can ever look to, after his life spent in his profession, be his success what it may."

She paused ; and Lady Seaton at last said, (but, Mrs. Vandeleur could not help fancying, with a slight degree of timidity very unusual to her,) " And does he assign no reason for his obduracy ?"

Her eyes were not cast down when she uttered the words, still less were they fixed upon her governess's countenance, but wandered with constrained indifference, as did her fingers, over the chords of a little musical toy which lay on the table beside her.

“ No, none,” Mrs. Vandeleur answered ;
“ except the usual reply on such occasions, of
general disinclination to marriage, and devotion
to his profession. I trust the life he is now
leading may not wholly unfit him for that he is
likely to lead in future.”

“ And what is that ?”

“ That of an unfortunèd soldier in country
quarters.”

A silence of some minutes succeeded. At
last Lady Seaton said, with all her usual grace
and self-possession, “ It is not indeed a case, I
fear, in which we can give you any assistance ;
and therefore, dear Mrs. Vandeleur, I shall bid
you good night ;” and she accordingly with-
drew.

The Duke of Castleton had returned to Lon-
don a day or two before the Hamptons did,
and was received into the gay vortex there
with all the avidity that one of his high rank,
splendid fortune, courtly manners, and really
gentle and amiable temper, deserved. He

bowed, and smiled, and danced, as fancy or propriety dictated, amongst his numerous acquaintances ; but, alas ! it was very soon perceived that, even while he smiled on one, his eyes were wandering round the crowded room in search of another form ; that form was Lady Seaton's.

What is it that makes men and women love those most who least resemble themselves ?—It is a wise decree of Providence, that the balance of good and evil should be fairly adjusted.

Young ladies, as soon as this predilection on the duke's part was discovered, gave up all hopes ; for few, even in their own estimation, could hope to rival Lady Seaton. But not so their wiser mothers : they peeped farther behind the scenes, and plainly perceived that Lady Seaton was as indifferent to the duke, as the duke was enamoured of her.

“ It will never be a match,” said the Dowager Marchioness of L., who had three fair daughters in the room at the time, and whom,

they being exactly the same height and remarkably like each other, she had taken the desperate step of bringing out together, on the speculation of their being called 'the Graces.' "It will never be a match, my dear madam: I know Lady Seaton's independent temper too well."

"Yes, but *I* know her father's, from whom she derives it; and, believe me, he will carry his point, though in all courtesy," replied the young Countess of S., whose daughters were yet all children.

"But the man can never propose; she treats him so haughtily."

"Never mind; he knows what he is about: he is gentle, and has never ventured to say anything to her to induce a refusal; and he will take advantage of that, and will apply to her father."

It was even so. It might have been about a month after Lord Hampton returned to London, that he one morning requested his daughter to give him an audience in the library.

She of course immediately complied, and he there informed her of the proposals of the Duke of Castleton. He waited some moments for her reply. "Well, Theodosia?" he said at last.

"Well, my dear father, to decline them, of course."

"On what plea, Theodosia?"

"On what plea, father!—rather, on what plea should I accept them?"

It is needless to go over Lord Hampton's answer, and all that ensued in enumeration of the advantages of the alliance. It is enough to say, that Lady Seaton was for the first time afraid to examine her own heart. To her father she offered the excuse of utter indifference.

"This cannot, or at least ought not to induce you to refuse him time to endeavour to remove that indifference, Theodosia," the marquis answered. "You know that I have never pressed you upon this subject of marriage, and therefore——"

She earnestly interrupted him — “ And therefore do not do away now with your former indulgence, my dear, dear father : let me continue happy with you ! ” and she knelt before him.

“ This, Theodosia,” said the marquis, attempting to raise her, “ is acting like a boarding-school citizen, or the heroine of some low-lived novel.”

Lady Seaton instantly rose, and stood respectfully, but with an air of almost offended dignity, before him.

“ I beg your pardon, Theodosia,” he added, “ but I am really surprised and disappointed.— You will at least permit the duke’s attentions as usual ? ”

“ *As usual* I will, sir ; but that, you must be aware, will be with marked disapprobation.”

Lord Hampton rose and left the room, as if afraid to trust himself with a further reply. Lady Seaton sank into a chair the moment he disappeared, and remained there in no enviable state of mind, until Mrs. Vandeleur entered in

search of a book. In a moment she was struck with the abstraction and depression of Lady Seaton's air, so very unusual to her.

“ My dearest Lady Seaton, what is the matter ?” she asked in unfeigned alarm, and knelt down before her in her anxiety, in order to look into her face, which was supported between her hands, while her elbows rested on the arms of her chair. Without changing her position, Lady Seaton turned her eyes on her governess for a moment, as if hesitating how to reply to her ; when suddenly, as if she read in her anxious face all the sympathy she sought for, she threw herself upon her neck and whispered, “ The duke has proposed to my father.”

Mrs. Vandeleur folded her closer in her arms, and at the moment mistaking the cause of her emotion, warmly exclaimed, “ From my heart I congratulate you, my dearest child !”

She was soon made aware of her error : Lady Seaton no sooner heard the exclamation, than, disengaging herself coldly, but hastily from her

arms, she pushed her from her with the nearest approach to anger she had ever exhibited, and left the room without uttering another word.

Mrs. Vandeleur remained as it were paralysed for a few minutes; but fully aware that something more than common must have happened to affect her temper and spirits thus, she hastened after her to her dressing-room. There, to her surprise, she found her engaged with her women preparing to go out to ride. Mrs. Vandeleur paused a moment, hoping that she might dismiss them; but soon perceiving that such was not her intention—indeed that she even studiously, as she thought, avoided doing so, she quietly approached the dressing-table, and waited there until the toilette was completed. Still she was disappointed; for Lady Seaton no sooner found herself freed from their officious hands, than she turned hastily to her governess, and whispering, “Forgive me, dearest Mrs. Vandeleur, I was very naughty,” touched her cheek

with hers, and flew down stairs as if her life depended on her not losing a moment. Even that passing touch, however, was sufficient to convince her maternal friend that her cheek was flushed and feverish.

“ I see some one galloping after us very fast in the distance,” said Captain Vandeleur, with a faint but expressive smile, as he rode up with some trifling commission to Lady Seaton’s side.

“ Who is it ?” she asked hastily.

“ Why, no *eyes* could tell at this distance ; but fortunately we have perceptions independent of our outward organs, and mine tell me it is the Duke of Castleton.”

“ Your perceptions must be keen ;—are they so on all occasions ?”

“ Why, I rather think you hit me fairly, for falling into the common error of calling deductions perceptions. Though I certainly could not distinguish the duke’s person, I am satisfied that it was his hurried pace made me guess

that it must be he ; and now I can see by less equivocal signs that I was right,—it is his noble self. I fall back to my place, to deliver your answer to my message.”

“ It requires no answer, does it ? At least, I think I gave none.”

“ But will you not ?”

“ I shall consider.”

“ Nay, this is tyranny,” said he, laughing, “ not to allow me to cover my retreat under this form.”

“ Why must you retreat at all ?”

“ Nay, if you do not command me—” he said, looking at her with some astonishment ; but then recollecting himself, he added : “ But no—I will not abuse your kindness and good-nature ; I shall not usurp this coveted place.”

“ Certainly not, if you do not wish to retain it,” she said more seriously ; but at the same time averting her head with a degree of consciousness which gave double force to her expressions.

The young man paused a moment in anxious doubt; then, in a low emphatic voice he repeated, "If I do not wish it! O God! enable me never to listen to the dictates of my wishes!"

"They must surely then be something very criminal," she said hurriedly, and putting her horse into a light canter as she spoke, while he was under the necessity of keeping at her side to catch her words.

"No," he answered, "my prayer was not as religiously meant as you interpret it; I rather prayed to be saved from sorrow than from sin."

"You are abstruse this morning. I confess I see not how following the dictates of your wishes could tend to your unhappiness, except through sin."

"I spoke not of following my wishes, Lady Seaton; that rests not with me. I spoke of presuming to allow my own heart to commune with itself, and even learn what they may be;

lest, like Narcissus of old, it should grow enamoured of its own *reflection*, and die in despair."

He tried to smile and give an air of playfulness to the latter part of his speech; but it would not do. The tone of truth and deep feeling could not be disguised. Lady Seaton remained silent for a moment, with her head still rather averted, until Vandeleur said,

"Lady Seaton, the duke has fallen into our rear; he is just exchanging compliments there previous to joining you. Tell me seriously if you wish me to prevent his obtaining this place at your side."

"Seriously, then, *I do*. I am really at a loss," she said quickly, after a moment's hesitation, "to account for Captain Vandeleur's anxiety to forward the Duke of Castleton's views or wishes in little matters where gentlemen are generally allowed, and indeed generally prefer," (she added a little contemptuously,) "trusting to their own powers."

“ I am at a loss to understand you.”

“ Oh, why writing love-sonnets for them ; making way for them to get near particular persons, &c. &c. Has my father given you commission to this effect ? or does Captain Vandeleur think that he alone has magnanimity enough to disregard worldly advantages ?”

The unfortunate young man to whom this speech was addressed, was thrown into the utmost agitation—we had almost said consternation, by it. Through a good deal of bitterness of feeling, and some hauteur of manner, he could not but perceive the blushing cheek, and hurried palpitating breathing. Spouting hackneyed sentiment was a style of conversation which he was well aware the refined, and high-bred countess, at all times held in the utmost horror, contempt, and disgust, and he therefore felt, through every nerve, that something awful to his fate was impending. As far, however, as the matter had yet gone, he could only affect to receive it as a sort of badinage. Ac-

cordingly, he answered, though still very unsuccessful in his attempts, "I assure you I never wrote any sonnets for the Duke of Castleton. When we were all condemned to try to drown rain in ink, I, like the rest, scribbled some lines, which the duke, without knowing what they contained, begged from me ; and as they were not worth refusing, I gave them."

"And had you time to compose others ? You must be very clever."

Vandeleur turned his eyes on her ; but hers were again carefully averted.

"No," he said ; "and I was not sorry to be spared saying what I could not have said lightly, and yet not seriously without impertinence : I was fain to take shelter under a flower."

"*Fain*—that is a quaint old mode of expression."

He turned to her again, to see if she wished to remind him of the line she had muttered that day ; but her manner appeared unembarrassed,

and she added, "It must have been a very high flower to have sheltered you."

"It was; but as *I feared not to climb* any height for the purpose for which I wanted it, I gained it. However, just as I attempted to go one step farther to obtain another, the ladder gave way, and I was precipitated from my giddy height.—But how did you know those lines were mine?"

"By *perception*, as you said to me just now. I knew they could not be the duke's; and I also knew that no one else of the party would have been so charitable to him, or perhaps could have afforded it."

"Well, poor man!" said Vandeleur with a slight smile, "I am making him pay dearly now, for having assisted him then. Observe how he keeps aloof, until I shall have the tact to resign in his favour. Well, if I am to become a dragon to scare off knights errant, I must only endeavour to do my *devoir* manfully."

There is a state of feeling—luckily it is a rare one—in which the slightest jest, or light allusion to the subject that at the moment is affecting one, falls like molten lead upon the nerves. Lady Seaton was, for the first time of her life, in this state of feeling.

“ Oh, pray do not invest yourself with any such unamiable character,” she said. “ If that is the only one in which you can consent to keep this place; I am aware that I have no right over Captain Vandeleur’s duty or allegiance.”

“ Yet have you command over every feeling or sentiment he possesses,” replied the young man, without farther hesitation, and in the most emphatic manner; “ and his only anxiety is how to render them subservient to your slightest wish, in the least obtrusive, least offensive form.”

Lady Seaton, like all persons whose feelings either of mirth, or anguish, have hurried them farther than they could foresee the consequences of, was now startled at the sudden and serious

change in Vandeleur's voice and manner ; yet, such is the waywardness of the heart if once listened to, that, in spite of all her efforts to look and feel calm and dignified, she only felt soothed and softened, and large and silent tears fell glittering upon her dark riding-dress.

Nothing, as may be supposed, could exceed the agitation, the alarm, the bewilderment into which Vandeleur was thrown at this unwonted sight. While he hesitated in an agony of uncertainty whether he had better seem to notice her emotion or not, he perceived that the Duke of Castleton, become hopeless of his withdrawing, was now making his escape from the rest of the party, and just preparing to ride forward to address Lady Seaton. As this, he was aware, could not fail to be most unpleasant to her at this moment, he drew close up to her, and laying his hand on her bridle-rein, said in a tone of voice in which tenderness, anxiety, and haste contended for mastery—

“ Dearest Lady Seaton, bear with me for a

moment. The Duke of Castleton is just coming up to speak to you : if you would not that he saw you just now, let us gallop forward and turn off the high road until you are better."

" I cannot, I cannot !" she sobbed forth almost in a passion of tears ; " I really am unable : besides, it would look too marked, too ridiculous."

The duke galloped up.

" Lady Seaton is not well," said Captain Vandeleur, (while she pressed her handkerchief to her face and stifled her sobs,) — " and as she is anxious not to alarm and break up the riding-party, I want her to turn down this sort of avenue just before us, until she recovers, and then either return home or follow them."

The presence of a third person, especially when that person was the dreaded duke, partly removed Lady Seaton's objections to this proposal ; and as she felt really unequal to proceeding, she suffered the gentlemen to turn her horse down one of those beautiful green lanes, so

frequent in England, and of which one or two still remained at that time even in the neighbourhood of London. Here an abrupt turn, and the thick foliage of early summer, caused them in a few moments to be completely lost sight of from the road. They dipped Lady Seaton's handkerchief in a rivulet that ran close by; and as she applied it to her eyes and temples, she said, "I am better now; and if I could get a message conveyed to Lady Augusta Starling, she would manage to leave the party without breaking it up, and would, I know, accompany me home."

The duke, with lover-like alertness, undertook the office of messenger,—for such had been the guarded propriety of Vandeleur's bearing towards Lady Seaton upon all occasions, that not even the jaundiced eye of jealousy had found any exercise through him.

The moment the duke was out of sight, Vandeleur approached Lady Seaton, and although fearfully apprehensive of appearing impertinent—

ly intrusive, felt it impossible to resist inquiring the cause of her emotion, to which, strange as it might be, it certainly appeared that he had contributed, if not entirely occasioned. Under this impression, he said: "Can you acquit me of impertinence, Lady Seaton, if I venture to inquire if anything I have said has offended you? Believe me, at least, that it should not be so: mine is rather the dumb and disinterested devotion of the dog, than the presumptuous——" He hesitated to pronounce the word *love*; and leaving the sentence unfinished, he went on to say, "But this it cannot be; this you are too well accustomed to, though not perhaps either in kind or in degree, to be offended at it.—But this is transgressing: I would only ask if there is anything in my power to do—any sacrifice of life or limb that I can make,—in short, Lady Seaton, I would ask if the time is come when *my* highest ambition shall be crowned by serving or assisting *you*?"

There was something so gentle, so devoted,

yet so manly and so upright, in this expression of attachment, that Lady Seaton's tears, agitated as her spirits were, flowed afresh; and as Captain Vandeleur approached her in alarm, she suffered her hand to rest upon his shoulder. He shuddered beneath its gentle pressure; and, after standing for a moment as if transfixed, he gently withdrew himself, and moved to a greater distance. At that moment the duke appeared with Lady Augusta Starling; and Lady Seaton, making a violent effort over herself, was able to answer the inquiries, and expressions of alarm and regret, which were showered upon her, with tolerable calmness. They proceeded homewards without delay; and as soon as they arrived, Lady Seaton, pleading indisposition, retired for the evening to her dressing-room.

CHAPTER VII.

And what, oh ! what is this to the pain
Of chilling young Love's first blush,
And with steady hand, ere yet 'tis in vain,
Its first sweet blossoms to crush !

Yet shrink, oh ! shrink not from this, ye to whom
The ungenial task may be given ;
For the love thus embalm'd in its first pure bloom
May blossom again in Heaven !

ANONYMOUS.

LADY SEATON had not been many minutes alone, when Mrs. Vandeleur, hearing of her sudden return, hastened with anxiety to inquire the cause of it; and never, in the course of that lady's long and watchful guardianship, had she been on any occasion so thoroughly alarmed as now, at the state in which she found her beloved pupil, in this her first hour of unhappiness.

On her knees, beside the couch on which Lady Seaton lay in gloomy silence, she implored of her to unburthen her mind, and conjured her to remember that she was addressing her most anxious friend, and one who was an indulgent mother.

“ Ah ! but not of daughters,” said Lady Seaton with some degree of bitterness : “ and what is noble and dignified in man, is considered weak and unbecoming in woman.”

“ It is rarely the case,” said Mrs. Vandeleur, “ to that extent ; and if you would but intrust me with the cause of your present distress, perhaps we should find that this is not one where their principles are at variance.”

“ Be it so, then,” said Lady Seaton ; and suddenly raising herself on the couch, “ The case is simply this : that—your son and I agree too well in our sentiments and ideas concerning love and marriage ! ”

How little have words to do in communicating the thoughts and feelings of the heart !

Such a sentence, uttered in common conversation or in ordinary circumstances, might have conveyed nothing more than an abstract coincidence of opinion, founded on reason, between two persons, and might have existed between two ladies: but, preceded and accompanied by the unwonted emotion of Lady Seaton, as it was in the present instance, poor Mrs. Vandeleur, whose fears had been already vaguely excited on the subject of her son's and her pupil's mutual regard,—though none but a mother's eye could have detected it,—interpreted Lady Seaton's confession according to her fears; and releasing the hand which she had hitherto held between hers, she pressed both hers upon her own brow, and exclaimed, "Then my worst fears are true! my prayers have been in vain!"

Lady Seaton raised herself upon her elbow to gaze upon her. "What prayers?—in Heaven's name, what prayers?—what can you or do you mean?"

The governess pressed her forehead against

Lady Seaton's arm, and, throwing her own around her waist, she exclaimed, "Theodosia! countess! child of my affections and of my cares! know, that what you have just told me afflicts, but does not surprise me. My unfortunate son's infatuation I have for some time suspected, and your gentle appreciation of what a mother may be allowed to call his merits, I have sometimes feared; but, God knows how little I ever thought it would come to this!" And she bowed her head still lower against the sofa, though she pressed Lady Seaton still more fondly.

"And may I ask the cause of this overwhelming affliction at the discovery?" asked Lady Seaton, rather submitting to, than returning, her embrace.

"The cause!—can you indeed ask me the cause? See you not the misery, the ingratitude, the disgrace that it involves?"

"I confess myself not so clear-sighted. Disgrace, misery, and ingratitude to whom?"

"Disgrace to you, my love, my child, my darling!—ingratitude to your father and his family!—and, oh! Countess of Seaton, misery to us all!" She wept bitterly.

Lady Seaton's good sense, and kind heart, were touched by her distress. She wound her arms round her neck; and, hiding her face in her bosom, she gave to the tried friend of her life the particulars of what had passed that day.

When she had finished, Mrs. Vandeleur, who had risen and seated herself beside her on the sofa, again sank upon her knees, and bowing her head and clasping her hands, exclaimed, "I thank thee, I thank thee, O gracious Lord! Godfrey my son is still upright and noble; and you, my equally beloved child, are still unfettered, uncompromised."

"You are certainly, at all events, a most disinterested mother," observed Lady Seaton, again a little struck by the fervour of her thanksgiving, as it were, at her son's escape.


“ I trust I am, where your happiness or respectability is concerned : you saw it otherwise with me in the case of my young relative. But retire now to your chamber, my dearest love. Admit me in the morning, and I will give you in full my ideas upon this subject ; and if I fail to convince your reason, remember, I am still Godfrey’s mother, and your devoted friend.”

So saying, she rose to ring for Lady Seaton’s attendants ; but the latter conjured her to say whatever she wished upon the subject at once, and assured her it would contribute more to her repose.

“ I only can judge of that, my child,” replied Mrs. Vandeleur ; “ and do you give me now an example of that command of mind which I have endeavoured to ensure to you, but which you have never been called upon to exercise before. Dismiss the matter from your mind for this night, as you are aware that you are not in a state to view it dispassionately ; and to-morrow morning, believe me, you shall be

the arbitress of your own fate !” Soothed, comforted, and supported by remonstrances at once kind and judicious, Lady Seaton yielded ; and only detaining Mrs. Vandeleur until her spirits became more composed, she retired for the night.


It was considerably past her usual hour when Lady Seaton entered her dressing-room the following morning. She had ordered breakfast there for herself and Mrs. Vandeleur, and accordingly, on her entrance, she found that lady anxiously awaiting her. The moment she appeared, Mrs. Vandeleur threw aside the book she had been reading, and leading her at once to the breakfast-table, touched, without affectation or apparent effort, upon the various indifferent little topics which usually furnish breakfast conversation : but no sooner was the breakfast-table removed, than, anxious to relieve the mind of her beloved pupil from the suspense and inquietude which she knew were preying upon it, she gently took her hand, which



trembled within hers, and leading her to the sofa, adverted at once to the subject that was unfinished when they parted the evening before. Lady Seaton's pale cheek assumed even more than its usual brilliant hue when she began; but it was only for a moment; and she prepared herself to attend with calmness and composure.


“ My dearest child,” said Mrs. Vandeleur, placing her arm tenderly round her waist, “ I will not keep you in suspense respecting sentiments which I promised last night to express to you, and which, were it only from their subject, must naturally be interesting to you; but which, I know, will likewise have a merit in your eyes from being mine. Listen to me, then, with patience; but fail not to interrupt me if there are any to which your reason does not assent. That is all I seek to gain over to my cause; for, to your heart, against *it*, I know you would never listen. In the first place, then, I would protest decidedly against the maxim, so common amongst

young people, that it is tyranny in their parents or family to control their wishes on the subject of marriage, on the plea of its being a matter which only concerns themselves. In any rank of society I deny this to be the case; but the higher the rank in life, the more decidedly it is the contrary. Every member of a family is, in my opinion, bound by moral links to contribute his or her share of happiness to the general stock, and has *no right* to destroy it for the gratification of their individual self, still less for that of a stranger. This, however, like everything else, has its limits, of course. Happiness, I believe, was originally intended by an all-wise Providence to be pretty equally diffused; and whether it was by his institutions, or by those of man, that some are rich and some are poor, I will not now inquire: it is enough for our purpose to know that the advantages of the rich are clogged by duties and restraints from which the poor man is free, and thereby in some degree compensated for the want of them.



There is no one, I believe, who in the abstract will deny, that whoever accepts the advantages of any situation, tacitly binds himself, unless by previous stipulation, to conform to its conditions. My study with you has ever been, that you should shrink from nothing—*nothing* in practice, which you admit in theory. I believe the neglect of this to be one of the fundamental errors of human nature—the open and declared war, as it were, between the spirit and the flesh; for “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” The gamester, the drunkard, the debauchee—ay, even the scoffer, I could pardon and excuse, while their minds were so darkened that they saw not the error of their ways: but I always turned with a kind of loathing despair from those who exclaim, ‘I know it is very wrong, but I cannot help it.’ You tell me that you did not—perhaps do not believe your feelings to have been wrong. I do not doubt it, my child: but, as I hope to convince you that they are so, like a cunning arguer I am

trying to cheat you into an admission before you are aware of the consequences it involves. However, both my case and my judge are, I believe, too good to require that management ; so I shall proceed at once to the duties of your station. Of your individual duty to your only parent, I will not speak ; because you might answer me, that if he should be induced to act tyrannically, your duty to obey him ceases : it is my part, then, to endeavour to prove to you, that in withholding his consent from a disproportioned marriage, or even in strongly urging the advantages of another, he does *not* act tyrannically, or in any manner inconsistently with his duty towards you. I said, we each had duties according to our different stations : yours happens to be invested with rank, connexions, and influential wealth ; therefore your marriage is a matter of serious importance to many besides yourself : and tell me, are you justifiable in setting aside their claims for any selfish consideration ? Perhaps you will say that the happiness



of a dearer self is at stake ; but I appeal to yourself again if this is not the most dangerous kind of selfishness under the disguise of generosity. Ask yourself, if that object, however worthy and deserving, happened to be one who excited some unaccountable antipathy in you, whether from any consideration for his happiness, or if even to save him from destruction or death, you could be induced to stoop from your high station to become his wife?—or whether you would not consider any one a presumptuous fool who should propose the unreasonable sacrifice? There may be cases in which all I have been saying may, and ought to be set aside ; but such cases are rare, and are rather to be avoided as exceptions, than brought forward as precedents. Of the unhappiness likely—indeed certain—to ensue to yourselves, I will not speak—because that is beyond the reach of any young imagination to conceive while under the opposite delusion.”

Here Lady Seaton interrupted her for the

first time. "Indeed you do me less than justice there!" she exclaimed. "I believe I should not have been happy if—under all the circumstances,—in short, it was a thing which I considered as impossible as he did, until—until—perhaps for one moment yesterday—and then—it certainly was a strange moment—a sort of era in my moral existence—the voice of uncontrolled nature, heard, as it were, for the first time,—a wild feeling that my destiny was in my own hands. And, after all, Mrs. Vandeleur, surely—but no—that is only one side of the picture!"

"True, true, my love. I believe that a well-assorted marriage—that is, one where, with perfect esteem and affection, neither party makes any great sacrifice of station or other advantages—may produce the greatest happiness which human nature is capable of enjoying. But there are natural laws of mind, as well as of matter; there is as surely a moral, as a physical chemistry; and the combinations which constitute

happiness and virtue, when complete, may, by the addition or loss of one single ingredient, produce misery and remorse. It is to the want of proper skill in, or due attention to, this mental or moral chemistry, that half our sorrows and our sins are owing. And now I would call your attention to the presumption of any individuals' murmuring, because disappointed of the exact portion or kind of felicity which they had struck out for themselves. It is this wayward presumption, which, refusing to take any, because it cannot have all, makes unhappiness out of what ought only be a matter of quiet, patient acquiescence. Duty, circumstances—everything forbids your union with my son; banish it then at once and for ever from your thoughts. Let him continue hereafter your friend, or your acquaintance, according as you may deem proper; and show me, and show yourself, that no selfish feeling has the power to turn you aside from the duties of your high station. Prove that to know your duty, and to fulfil it, are one and

the same with you." She paused, and remained with her anxious eyes riveted, as they had been throughout, upon the downcast but attentive countenance of her hearer.

Lady Seaton spoke not for a few minutes ; but then, with a very low sigh, and a peculiar smile of cold but decisive resignation, and without raising her eyes, she said, " It shall be so, my dearest Mrs. Vandeleur ; but surely it does not follow that I must marry another ?"

" I think it does, from the same course of reasoning. I think it your duty to your father, and to your situation in life, that you should marry. The social compact is a chain composed of many links, or rather, a complicated machine, of which each separate part has a duty to perform, which works together for the general good ; and I do not think that, as society is regulated at present, any individual has a right to seek his or her own selfish gratification, regardless of its effects upon that society, unless they are prepared to forego every advantage

also which they derive from it. In a savage state, indeed, where man is willing to owe his pleasures and his subsistence to the labour of his own hands, and where he has only them to afford him protection from his fellow-savages, he is free to follow the bent of his inclinations : but I would it could be proved how long the love, that we are here disposed to break through all social, if not all moral laws to gratify, would stand amid the universal wreck and chaos of those laws !”

“ But, Mrs. Vandeleur, there is yet a point to be considered, and I blush to have subjected myself to the necessity ;” and she did blush to intensity, and pressed her hands upon her temples. “ But do you not think that I have committed myself in some degree to Captain Vandeleur ?”

“ Most unreservedly I can say, I do not, my child. Some vain and giddy boy might perhaps have drawn some such flattering conclusion from your agitation, and even from the few

words that passed ; but sure I am, that Godfrey never caught a glimpse of such hopes. No, no ; not heroism itself could enable him to endure the overthrow of such hopes, one moment indulged in.—No ; he probably guesses what your feelings are towards the duke, and thinks that the hurry of your spirits threw you a little off your usual dignified bearing, and suffered the Marquis of Hampton's heiress to be a moment forgotten in the confiding woman."

" But he saw that I did not resent his expressions of—of——deep regard."

" You had been to blame if you had resented them : there was enough on your part to call for all he uttered, (you see—you know that I always speak the exact truth,) and as he presumed no farther, I can scarcely even regret what has passed ; it has brought the matter to its little climax, and, I hope, its end. Nor do I tell you now that you should shun poor Godfrey, or he you. I believe neither of you can ever think better of the other than you do at

this moment; and when hope is over, as in your well-regulated mind it will be from this day, and as in his it never existed, or at least will not survive the knowledge of your engagement, I believe that time, while it cements your friendship and esteem, will gradually deprive it of all warmer colouring. I am aware that to some weak and frivolous spirits, who could not answer for their own resolutions, or rather for the stability of their principles, beyond the moment of discussion, this might be dangerous indulgence: but with you, my noble pupil, I think it entirely depends on whether the pleasure of his society is, or is not, too dearly purchased by the little regret you will perhaps often feel through life—not that he is not your husband, but that your husband is not like him. But I am so far from thinking that a subdued and momentary regret of that kind is inconsistent with our highest duties as wives, that I look on it as wild and dangerous romance to teach a girl that she should not marry any

man except the one she thinks superior to all others. Nothing that is false can be desirable or right : and think how few marriages could take place were this conscientiously observed ! and it is a bad and dangerous principle to make anything a point of conscience that is not to be strictly observed,—if possible, even enforced. The sort of happiness allotted for you, my beloved girl, does not seem to be that of mutual and rapturous love in your wedded life ; then turn your thoughts to some other source for it ; and I as sincerely believe, as I ardently pray, that you may have as much, and even perhaps far more than that could have afforded to you.”

Mrs. Vandeleur ceased, and perceiving Lady Seaton to be rather disposed to deep reflection on what had passed, than to uttering any observation or comments upon it, she rose, pressed her lips upon her forehead, and left the room. Once she paused at the door, to consider whether or not she should say to Lady Seaton how fully she was aware of the disinterestedness, and

consequent depth, of her attachment, and therefore could fully appreciate the strength and uprightness of her mind in relinquishing it : but as Lady Seaton herself had never once throughout the conversation made an allusion to it, she properly conjectured that it was more consonant to the loftiness of her character to suffer her own self-approval to be her sole reward.

In a very short time it proved so ; but, in the mean while, the agitation she had undergone, the fever of remorse for having stooped for one dizzy moment from her height, (and who shall say, inconsistent though it may appear, that smothered affections did not also contribute their share ?) brought on an illness which confined her to her chamber, and nearly to her bed, for a fortnight.

What had become of Vandeleur in the mean time ? Anxiety and suspense are words that convey not the least idea of the torture he was undergoing. He was as little vain as any man

alive, and the least presuming; a native pride prevented this. Yet, notwithstanding his proud humility, and notwithstanding his mother's assurances to Lady Seaton that no hope had flashed across his mind, some wild and fluttering anxiety, very closely resembling it, was devouring his heart and brain; but it was so wild, so vague, and, as he thought, so impossible, that he determined not to act in any manner upon it until he should see Lady Seaton again.

For this purpose, he presented himself, day after day, at the door of Lord Hampton's mansion, with a burning cheek and palpitating heart: and when, day after day, he received the same answer, that Lady Seaton was still indisposed, he felt too wretched even to be seen by his mother, and returned home, to fling himself upon his couch, and remain there in agony of mind almost beyond endurance, sometimes until the following morning.

She recovered however, and he was admitted at last to see her. She was seated,

whether by design or otherwise he knew not, in one of the inner apartments of the suite, one to which morning visitors were not generally admitted. When he was announced, "I shall see him here," she said; and, as he approached, she rose not from her chair, but held out her hand very kindly to him. He seemed about to kneel before her, but a hasty blush, and almost a start, recalled and restrained him. He took a chair close beside her, and made the tenderest inquiries after her health, yet with a wild anxiety in his manner, and countenance, that distressed her. At length, as if himself unable to endure the state of his feelings, he said, "Lady Seaton, we may be momentarily interrupted—other visitors may claim your attention; will you therefore suffer me, however abruptly, to revert to the commencement of your late illness, or at least to the emotion to which I was witness? and believe me, oh! believe me, that no impertinent curiosity or even selfish anxiety induces me to this, but solely the glimpse of hope

that broke upon me then, that it might be in my power to serve or obey you in any manner?"

Lady Seaton paused one moment with downcast eyes; then, without raising them, calmly and decisively, though with gentleness, and even kindness, said, "I thank you most sincerely, Captain Vandeleur, but the matter which afflicted me then, and caused me to act so childish—so silly a part, (with a deep blush and a stifled sigh,) is one—in which you could not now render me the slightest service."

The sunburnt soldier turned as pale as death! There was a silence for several minutes, during which Lady Seaton never once raised her eyes from the embroidery on her pocket-handkerchief, which she seemed to be examining with critical minuteness. At last Vandeleur spoke again, and the tones of his voice had suddenly become hoarse and husky; "There is one word more I would say, Lady Seaton, and let it not offend you—God knows how remote from my soul is any feeling that ought to do so!—but something seemed to

weigh upon your mind ; it may not indeed be in my power to relieve it, but I would remind you once more, that life, and all it holds of worth to me, are at your disposal. I owe much to your father ; but there are feelings which man never can, and never ought to sacrifice to any other !” He paused.

Lady Seaton felt that the crisis of her fate and his was at hand. She remembered how much she had herself contributed to, if not wholly induced, any expression of the young man’s carefully controlled feelings ; and she duly appreciated the delicacy with which he intimated them now, under cover of a sentence that might bear the interpretation of only an ardent desire to serve her. She felt that everything called upon her to be explicit, and she therefore said with pointed emphasis and decision, though still in the gentlest and kindest manner that the circumstances admitted of, “Once more, from my very soul, I thank you, Captain Vandeleur : I esteem and respect you more than almost any

one ; and should an occasion ever occur in which you can serve me, I shall put your friendship to some test, you may believe me ; though never, I trust, to the test of—*disobliging my father !*”

She could not conceal a crimson blush and a slight tremour as she pronounced the last words, but she instantly held out her hand to him. He took it for a moment, but relinquished it without the slightest pressure. She had time, however, to feel that his was cold and clammy. She raised her eyes to his face ; cheeks, forehead, and lips were all of the same livid whiteness.

“ Good God ! Captain Vandeleur,” she exclaimed, starting up, “ you are unwell.”

It was a moment or two before he could answer her ; but, leaning back in his chair, he made an effort to recover himself, and succeeded. Then rising slowly, as if unwilling to relinquish a seat of which he had possessed himself under dominion of such different feelings, he said, “ Farewell then, Countess of Seaton !—God

bless you!—all is as it ought to be; I know and feel that it is so.—Farewell!” And having pronounced these words in a hoarse and smothered voice, he drew from his bosom a small locket, and taking from within it a soft, fair, silken curl, he laid it at Lady Seaton’s feet, and left the room.

A day or two after the foregoing conversation, Lord Hampton observed to Mrs. Vandeleur that her son had deserted their dinner-table, and civilly inquired the cause.

“He is gone out of town, my lord,” she replied, “on a visit to a friend of his at Bath. He charged me with his respects to your lordship, as he did not see you when he called. I expect him again in about a fortnight.”

And he did return; and though perhaps a less frequent, and certainly less animated, visiter at Lord Hampton’s than heretofore, such had ever been the unassuming propriety of his bearing to Lady Seaton, that no eye detected any further change. Nor, except amongst those

who had borne a part in it, did a suspicion ever exist on the great stage of high life, of the little tragedy that was enacted behind its scenes—the birth, and death of a passion, as pure, and which, had circumstances favoured it, had probably been as fervent, as any that ever linked two hearts together.

But what avails it now to say what *might* have been? pass we on to what *was*.

As soon as Vandeleur's leave of absence had expired, he joined his regiment in the North of England; and in about six months after, the news reached him that the Countess of Seaton had become Duchess of Castleton.

Perhaps it would not have been in human nature not to have felt a pang at the intelligence; but certain it is, that there mingled not with that pang, the slightest degree of resentment, or bitterness of feeling, towards her. His own quick sympathies told him all that had passed in her heart upon the subject, and he knew that it had been exactly as she had said

to her governess,—that it was but for one dizzy moment she had thought of the possibility of stooping from her height, however favourable towards him her secret wishes, and admiration of his engaging qualities, long had been. He felt also that, in marrying the duke, there did not linger in her heart one feeling that she would have banished thence; though perhaps, had she been able suddenly to transform that heart, as by degrees she hoped to do, she had caused it to glow with warmer feelings from the first towards him who was now her husband.

For himself, Vandeleur neither felt the same moral obligation, nor was it so essential to his peace of mind, to banish her image from his heart. In fact, the place it occupied there, was so far removed from that which is usually assigned to common love, that it partook far more of a sort of devotional respect, gratitude, and admiration, than of any more selfish feeling. The one hour of weakness, when she felt, (as she herself expressed it,) that her fate was in her

own hands, had indeed kindled in his breast a fever of anxiety, which partook of the nature of suspense, if not of hope : but it was so intensely agitating in its nature, so distracting, so overwhelming, that the change from it even to despair, came, after the first painful paroxysm, like a kind of relief and repose, even as the racking agony of an inflamed wound finds a pause of pain in the extinction of vitality. One permanent effect only the matter left upon his feelings ; which was, to render him much more fastidious in his intercourse with ladies than he had ever been before.

CHAPTER VIII.

As brother and sister born at one birth,
So Joy and Sorrow lighted on our earth,
Link'd to each other by the self-same tie
Of Nature's deep, mysterious sympathy.
For though young Joy may, in her wanton pride,
Gambol a moment from her brother's side,
If she but once attempt to use her wings,
He hies, and over her his dusky mantle flings.

ANONYMOUS.

Genius ! thou gift of Heaven, thou light divine,
Amid what dangers art thou doom'd to shine !
Oft will the body's weakness check thy force,
Oft damp thy vigour, and impede thy course ;
And trembling nerves compel thee to restrain
Thy nobler efforts to contend with pain !

It was not until two years had elapsed, after the events recorded in the preceding chapter, that Vandeleur believed it to be even possible, that another being existed, who could have

power to awaken the depth of feeling of which he had by this time learned that his heart was capable.

The circumstances which then induced this belief, were, his regiment being quartered in the neighbourhood of Beaumont Park, and his introduction to Gertrude Evelyn.

As he himself declared, however, nothing could, under one denomination, be more different than the kind of love he experienced towards each; that for Lady Seaton partaking of so many different feelings, that the result was rather awful than pleasurable; while, in being accepted as the husband of Gertrude, he felt that he was more perfectly happy, and satisfied with himself, and with the world, than he had ever been before on any occasion; and that he would not have exchanged his present prospects for any others that even his own imagination could have created. Nor, in gaining the first and best affections of that young, ingenuous, and confiding being, did he feel that he made an unsuitable re-

turn, by giving, in exchange for them, those that had already been almost offered to another. In that former intercourse there had been nothing to blight or sear the heart ; on the contrary, it had but gained strength, decision, and concentration, by the discipline it had undergone ; and perhaps never did two persons look forward to becoming votaries at the altar of Hymen, with happier auspices in their favour, than did that gallant soldier, and that lovely being, half child, half woman.

In her composition, what is usually termed *girlhood* seemed to have been forgotten, and the omission to have been atoned for, by her being permitted to retain all the graces of childhood, with the amiable and interesting feelings of young womanhood. The artificial restraints, the tutored propriety, the airs and graces, hopes and fears, of the young lady, were all forgotten ; and Gertrude Evelyn was either the artless playful child of Nature, or, when occasion required it, the delicate and exquisitely feeling woman.

In her own family, indeed, heretofore she had been unappreciated, except by her brother, who, though younger than herself, was, both by nature and education, more matured in his mind and knowledge of mankind. Little as his experience was, his good sense, as well as his affection, told him, that there could not be many people possessed of his sister Gertrude's sweetness of temper, kindliness of heart, and intelligence of mind, or earth must have been a better and a happier world than it was said to be; and he sometimes wondered how his father could overlook, or be insensible to, such a treasure. By Gertrude herself this was unperceived. From her birth she had been accustomed to see it thus; and as it would not have been possible for peevishness itself (and Mr. Evelyn was a good-tempered man,) to have spoken harshly to, or found fault with her, she supposed it to be the common course of things, that she was only to seek for affection, sympathy, and confidence in her brother. She found it, and was happy.

When Major Vandeleur appeared however, matters took another turn: the devoted and respectful love of a man whose manners, and conversation, at once asserted his superiority, raised poor little Gertrude even in her father's estimation; and when his proposals were accepted, she felt that the whole house was changed to her, except Herbert. But her innocent heart, without searching farther explanation, set it all down in some way to Vandeleur, and repaid them all tenfold, by her endearing, because diffusive, happiness.

The very neighbourhood around seemed destined to benefit by its influence; for Mr. Evelyn, by way of causing the time of Major Vandeleur's absence in London to pass less heavily, invited a party of friends to remain in the house, amongst whom were Lady Augusta Starling and her father.

Gertrude would gladly have dispensed with them all, (except perhaps Lady Augusta, who had promised to be her bridesmaid on the

approaching occasion ;) for her brother still continued to be the only one to whom she really opened her heart, and to whom she confided the full extent of her innocent joy in the prospect that was before her. Not a picture was sketched, not a scene imagined, in which Herbert still did not bear a prominent part ; and those skilled in the windings of the human heart would have seen, what she saw not herself, that the prospect of passing her life with one capable of appreciating her, was the chief ingredient in her scheme of happiness, and therefore she could not leave out of it one who, she felt, without knowing it, had ever done so.

But, although she would gladly have dispensed with the presence of strangers at such a moment, her spirits were too buoyant, and her temper too imperturbable, to be long discomposed by them ; and accordingly she went carolling about the house, and joining cheerily in every little plan of amusement, literally like some seraph, whose divine attribute it was to

diffuse happiness through the atmosphere with every waft of his wings !

In this joyous mood, one day, about a month after Major Vandeleur's last letter to his mother, and while they only waited his return for the marriage to take place, she agreed to make one of a gay equestrian party setting out from Beanton for a day's amusement, and which was to be joined, *en route*, by other ladies and gentlemen of the neighbourhood.

The day was bright and beautiful, though the summer was on its wane. But who does not know those delicious *pet-days*, as they are fondly called, of autumn, which, perhaps from the very rarity of their visits and the uncertainty of their continuance, sometimes elevate the spirits more than

“The long sunny lapse of a summer's day light?”

Nothing, at least, could exceed in brilliancy the spirits of the youthful party, who now set out to enjoy one of the loveliest of those lovely days, amidst some of the softest and richest scenery, in rich and luxuriant Eng-

land. As far as the eye could reach, it was feasted, and delighted, with smiling meadows; and with woods whose boughs bent gracefully down, to kiss the beautiful verdure that grew beneath them. Where the objects were too distant for minute observation, the whole was softly bathed in a rich, warm flood of purple haze, which, like the veil of beauty, only served to delight the imagination more.

And whence is this feeling? Can the limited mind of man, even in its revellings, surpass the works of Omnipotence, from which alone he has derived that imagination? — or, did he ever, after the fondest creation of his own fancy, believe for a moment that it was not equalled and surpassed by Nature's real workmanship? No! but the secret charm lies in his own imagination having done the work: "it is mine, and I made it," in the mouth of man, is the secret of all of beauty, and of worth, to him. Nor is it strange that it should be so: there is not a pleasure in Nature for us, except through

the medium either of our senses or mental faculties ; hence the more, and the oftener, they are called into exercise without fatigue, the more constant are our enjoyments. When the eye is already satiated with all it sees, to leave something beyond its reach, so as to call the mental faculties into action also, is, I believe, the simple solution of the question so often asked, Why is it that we always wish to have “ something left to the imagination ?” and which has sometimes been answered by attributing powers of creation to the mind of man surpassing those of God.

It is the same principle upon which healthy and intelligent children act, when they cast aside the gilded but unmeaning toy, to whirl the rude hoop, or pore over the ingenious puzzle.

This, too, is the secret of that love of novelty, so often imputed to man as a defect, but which, in my mind, only becomes so when it turns, for its gratification, from worthy, to unworthy objects. For ample, ample—far beyond the

limited span of man's short hour of existence here, is the field of Nature's wonders, in which he may range with still-increasing pleasure and still-progressing improvement !

“ How happy you must be, Gertrude ! ” exclaimed Lady Augusta Starling, from the mere excess of her own animal spirits ; and for which, being unable otherwise to account, as, of all human beings, she was the least accustomed to analyse her own sensations, she looked for the solution in her friend's approaching happy marriage.

“ I am indeed happy, most happy,” replied Gertrude, her eyes liquid from the exquisite nature of her enjoyment, and the glowing gratitude of her young heart. “ I am indeed happy : but who could be otherwise than happy, on such a day, and in such lovely scenery—even almost without a *Godfrey* ? ” And turning to her brother, she continued in a voice of rapture, her riding-hat pushed back from her beautiful forehead, her cheeks glowing in the warm sunbeams, and her whole Hebe-like countenance sparkling with

delight ; “ Oh ! is it not glorious ?—is not that scene of luxuriant and bountiful Nature enough to make glad the heart of man ? ”

“ It is, and of woman too, it seems,” said Herbert, smiling delightedly at her enthusiasm. “ But tell me, Gertrude, is it true what they say of all earthly happiness, that it is never so prized when it is really within our grasp, as when seen in the distant perspective ? ”

“ It is not, it is not ! ” she exclaimed enthusiastically, and with a smile so beamy as might indeed have been taken as a proof of her own sweet theory. “ There is nothing in true and beautiful Nature to confirm such forebodings—the mere phantoms of some one’s own disordered sensations. Is not happiness ours at this moment, until it is almost palpable, tangible, visible ? and are we not aware of it—grateful for it ? Listen, listen to that enchanting music from the birds around us, so much more delightful than all other music, just because we know it is the voice of happiness. I often fancy that the

throats of birds are little Æolian harps, which, when breathed on by the soft breath of spring and summer, give out the wild sweet music of Nature. Now inhale the breath of these gardens we are passing; look up to the bright beautiful blue of the summer sky, without shutting out all it shines upon; attend for a moment even to the delightful ambling pace which our steeds, as if from the very instinct of harmony, have fallen into, and tell me, is there anything left for the greatest gourmand after happiness to desire?"

"You did ill to choose the word *gourmand*," said Lady Augusta, "seeing that, in affecting to go through the gratification of our senses, you have cheated us of that which we derive from our dinner."

"Nay," said Herbert, "surely you perceive that *taste* is the sense she intends should give a zest to all the others!"

"Thank you, Mr. Evelyn; but I wonder how long 'the feast of reason, and the flow

of soul,' would compensate to English tastes for more substantial fare? I confess, the chief pleasure I derive from all this beauty, order, and cultivation around us, is in the idea of how wealthy and comfortable the people must be, and what excellent breakfasts, dinners, and suppers they can afford to have every day of their lives."

" Oh ! Augusta, how can you be so gross—so material?" said Gertrude, laughing.

" Gross ! material ! Why, that is what you always have recourse to, my most ethereal friend, when I speak plain common sense. But I should like to know how much of all these fine feelings the generality of honest English farmers, that ' staple commodity of the country,' would enjoy if they were excessively hungry ? I fancy, then, that a good comfortable brick-house, standing bolt upright, with a reeking chimney that seemed to say ' For further particulars inquire within,' would be the most delightful object in a landscape ; a snuff of nice

roast beef or mutton, the most delicious odour ; and you know, on better authority than mine, that

‘The jingling of glasses all music surpasses.’”

“ Let us put her out of company,” said Gertrude, turning playfully from her, to her brother.

“ Nay, you dare not quarrel with me for that ; for even that young Irish poet, who, in my private opinion, (which, like other people’s, is always at the service of the public,) rivals Vandeleur in your affections ; he—Moore, the author of those exquisite wild melodies, all sentimentalist as he is, and wishing to make us believe that he could live for ever on music and flowers, at the first sight of a smoking chimney betrays his fallen nature, and calls out—

‘ If there’s peace to be found in the world,
The heart that is humble might hope for it here :’

very rationally thinking that peace and plenty go together.”

“ And so I dare say they do,” said Gertrude : “ but who thinks of *peace* on such a day as this, when all around is rapturous happiness ?

You see, he says it is the *humble* heart which might be content with peace and plenty. I grant you that those who only look for *peace* may require to eke out their sensations with a little feasting now and then, while happiness feeds on its own sweet fancies."

"It cannot last long, then," said Lady Augusta, "if it preys on its own vitals."

"No punning, Augusta: you know we have instituted a fine for that offence."

"But that is not a pun. I protest Gertrude no more knows the definition of a pun, than the good man who thought that an anonymous letter was a pun!"

"Besides," said Herbert, "I think good puns should never be made subjects for fines: they are not only amusing, but show prompt recollection and aptitude, which, if not a talent in itself, at least very nearly approaches to one; to say nothing of the gay humour from which they must always spring, and generally excite."

"I know they rather make me cross than gay,"

said Lady Augusta: "and as for *recollection*, we all know that memory is the faculty of fools."

"That is another and a far more ridiculous prejudice," said Herbert: "and, if I might adopt a lady's style of reasoning, I should beg the question at once, and say that the very adage disproves itself; for, of course, he that wrote against memory had none himself, and yet he was evidently a fool! But a better defence may be to ask—What is all knowledge but a memory of what we have either seen, heard, read, or learned in some way?"

"Gertrude cried out to me, 'No punning, Augusta!' so I cry out to you, 'No prosing, Herbert!' I would even rather hear Gertrude talking about her happiness, albeit I cannot quite agree with her in living either on flowers or *music*: but I suppose my time will come too for the latter, seeing that in certain stages of every one's life it serves for food. At present, I shall beg to canter on for my luncheon instead;

since, alas! though two or three years older than she is, and not much uglier, yet

‘ There’s nobody coming to marry me,
Nobody coming to woo.’ ”

And giving her sweet voice to the gay words, she whipped her pretty pony into a canter, and was soon pursued at the same pace by the rest of the young party.

Lord Foxhill, and two or three elderly gentlemen, who, like himself, had fallen in with the party from the mere infection of happiness, contented themselves with keeping within hearing of their joyous young voices, which now were all joined in the merry chorus as they cantered along, and which would have communicated a sensation of gladness to age itself.

The gentlemen, if they did not express this feeling to each other, (and perhaps they would scarcely have known how) acknowledged it in the smile of benevolence that crept over every countenance, as they exchanged looks when the sounds reached their ears, and by the quick-

ened yet gentle trot by which they seemed desirous not to lose a note of it.

Suddenly the chorus ceased—there was a moment's silence—then a piercing shriek. The gentlemen, even at the distance which intervened, could distinguish a halt—a clustering and confusion—and several persons hastily alighting.

Lord Foxhill and his companions galloped forwards in alarm: as they approached, it was confirmed into consternation by the expression of every face they looked on. Two of the youthful party were not to be seen at the first glance; but the next instant, as the gentlemen alighted, and the terrified group who surrounded the principal sufferers, made way for them, they perceived young Evelyn extended on the ground, pale and motionless; whilst his sister Gertrude, not less pale, was kneeling beside him, wildly rubbing his hands, and kissing his lips, alternately, and breathing as if every gasp must exhaust life itself. She looked up as Lord Foxhill approached;—“See here!” she cried—
here is an agreeable termination of our ride!

It was indeed a fearful sight !—There was not the least appearance of any wound, yet not a sign of life was visible. Lord Foxhill raised the youth's head, loosened his neckcloth, chafed his hands, without effect. One of the young men of the party had already galloped off to the town of B—— for a surgeon ; while another was despatched to the nearest cottage in search of a table, or some board, on which to convey the unfortunate young man to his home.

In the mean time Lord Foxhill was able to gather the following account of the accident :—The horse which Herbert had ridden was wild and fiery, and being excited by the noise and cantering about him, had suddenly plunged forward ; and when Herbert, with a master's hand, reined him strongly in, he reared so violently that he fell backwards upon his rider. The horse was instantly dragged up ; but Herbert's head had come against the ground ; and though no visible injury was inflicted, he had never moved since it occurred.

Almost immediately some peasants arrived with a light table and mattress; and on this the boy was laid, and carried homewards by as many as his weight required. Gertrude insisted on walking beside them; and, without uttering a single word, she continued breathing in the same gasping and laboured manner until they arrived at Beanton.

Fortunately Mr. Evelyn was not at the moment in the house; and as the young man who had gone in search of the surgeon soon returned with the intelligence that he was not at home, nor expected until the following day, every remedy that the invention of any of the party could suggest, except the salutary one of bleeding, was resorted to, in hopes of restoring animation before the unhappy father should return.

For a long time all efforts were alike fruitless; but at length they perceived his colour begin to change, and presently a movement of his chest showed that life was not extinct; and by the time that Mr. Evelyn did arrive, the

party, though still agitated and uneasy, were so far recovered from their first alarm as to be able to communicate the account of the accident to him with tolerable calmness. He immediately repaired to his son's apartment; but he, not having been, like the rest, relieved from still more fatal apprehensions, was overwhelmed at the state in which he found him. The boy lay perfectly still, with his eyes closed, and, except by breathing, gave no sign of life. His father called him several times by name without producing the slightest sign of attention; and when at last, in an uncontrollable burst of parental anguish, he cried out between a shout and a scream—"Herbert!—my boy, my boy!" and dropped on his knees beside him, the noise seemed to have just roused him sufficiently to induce him slowly to open his eyes; but instantly they were closed again, and nothing after this seemed to produce the least consciousness.

Mr. Evelyn despatched an express immediately to Major Vandeleur to London, request-

ing him to return with the most eminent medical man he could procure on the instant; and in the mean time every means that could be devised by the family to preserve life by cordials and stimulating draughts were resorted to; and thus was increased the pressure on the brain, already but too powerful.

Gertrude never left his bedside, although he never for one moment showed the least sign of being conscious of her presence. When entreated to take any food or drink that was presented to him, he seemed not only as if he understood not, but as if he did not even hear: yet, when his lips were gently opened, and liquid put into his mouth, he swallowed it without much apparent effort.

He continued in this state during the remainder of that day and night: and about ten o'clock next morning Major Vandeleur arrived, bringing with him Dr. C——, a surgeon and physician, at that time eminent in the medical world, but who has since fallen a victim to his profes-

sional labours. They entered the young man's chamber together ; and so absorbed was Gertrude in watching the countenance of her beloved brother, and listening to his breathing, and so utterly regardless of what was passing round her, and of who came in, and who left the room, that they had advanced to the bedside, and gazed a moment on the patient, before she perceived that Major Vandeleur was arrived.

Gertrude was new to grief and new to sickness. She saw that something very unusual was the matter with her brother ; she saw it even by the anxiety of those around her : but yet, as he did not seem to suffer pain, she flattered herself that they were all, herself included, unnecessarily alarmed ; and she had looked forward with a vague, undefined hope to Major Vandeleur's arrival, as if some one who had not been present at the first shock must prove a better, a more favourable judge.

What, then, were her sensations, when a stifled groan causing her to look up, she per-

ceived at once the dismay and anguish with which he too gazed upon the object of their mutual and nearly equal affection ! She uttered a piercing shriek, and, springing to his arms, pressed her hand wildly over his eyes, as if by shutting out that agonised look, the object that excited it could be rendered less sad ; then burst into a flood of tears, the first that had come to her relief since the accident had occurred. They flowed now in a profusion that threatened suffocation ; and by the orders of Mr. C—— she was conveyed to her own apartment, where, by the aid of soothing anodynes, her shattered nerves found rest at last in heavy sleep.

For several succeeding days Herbert Evelyn manifested but very slight symptoms of amendment. By degrees, however, he did improve ; his appetite, and with it his strength, began to return ; and yet, to the astonishment of those around him, Mr. C—— in each succeeding visit seemed less and less satisfied with his progress.

He changed his mode of treatment again and again, and finally tried in succession every plan that skill, judgment, or experience could suggest; but still the effect he wished for was not produced; and at length, with all the delicacy and kind consideration which the heart-rending circumstance admitted of, he communicated to Major Vandeleur, that although the boy's life was no longer in any danger, and his bodily health tolerably restored, he greatly feared that there was some injury inflicted on the brain which was at present beyond the power of the medical art to remove. But while he thus gently endeavoured to prepare Major Vandeleur for his continuing in the listless—alas! almost idiotic state in which he had been ever since the accident, he held out hopes that, as his constitution strengthened, and his growth increased, better prospects might be looked for. In the mean time, as soothing and affectionate attention, with the careful absence of anything that might irritate or alarm him, was all that could prove

serviceable, he intimated that further attendance on his part was unnecessary.

Major Vandeleur stood aghast at this announcement. He had for some time past remarked how listless, and unobservant of everything around him, Herbert had appeared; but the fearful idea of his mental faculties being permanently injured had never come across him. Death itself would have appeared a less dreadful change, than to behold that intellectual and gifted being converted in a moment into a helpless idiot. His muscular frame shook with the violence of his emotion, and he again asked Mr. C—— if he had indeed any hope of his final restoration. Mr. C—— again assured him that there was no reason to think that it might not be so; but as it would come on, if at all, by slow and imperceptible degrees, it was absolutely necessary to prepare his friends for what they were to expect, and the treatment they were to pursue.

Major Vandeleur left the house with Mr. C——, and accompanied him part of the way

to town, for the purpose as well of taking further directions concerning Herbert, as to delay as long as possible the misery of communicating such disastrous tidings to his father and sister. Finally, he resolved within himself, that the best plan would be to hint it as well as he could to Mr. Evelyn, but to suffer it to break by degrees upon the young and innocent Gertrude, whose nerves were already too much shaken to allow him to risk the additional agitation which such a communication must produce in her at present.

In pursuance of this plan, he sought out Mr. Evelyn, and with as much tenderness and judgment as if he were indeed his son, and the youth his only brother, he informed him that he must not look for as speedy a restoration of the boy's usual liveliness, and brightness of intellect, as they could wish; but failed not to hold out the utmost extent of hope that Mr. C——'s authority permitted him. Veil it as he might, however, the shock was overwhelming; and the gal-

lant soldier could not contain his own tears, as he heard the loud sobs of the afflicted father.

“My beautiful boy! my beautiful boy! of whose talents and acquirements I was so proud, though scarcely myself capable of appreciating them!—and his poor doting sister!”

They were the kindest words Vandeleur had ever heard him utter concerning his daughter, and he hastened to take advantage of them, and to divert the poor man’s attention to anything in which it could avail. “Ay, there is indeed the point to consider,” said he; “there is indeed the point for consideration and self-control.”

He then communicated to him his idea of its being better to suffer the melancholy truth to dawn by degrees upon her mind, than to startle her by any intimation of it, however tenderly conveyed, since, to her, no hint for cautions or watchful attention could be necessary. Mr. Evelyn agreed with him in this; and as soon as he hoped he had gained some composure

and command over himself, he repaired with him to the chamber of the youth.

Herbert was now accustomed to sit up for some hours of every day in an arm-chair, but preserved almost unbroken silence, and could seldom be prevailed upon even to answer any question. Yet, as his family, accustomed to this from the first, had never until now formed the slightest surmise of his real situation, they had hitherto attributed his silence to mere bodily exhaustion, or to some internal suffering which had not yet been removed. Gertrude was the only one of whom he ever appeared to take the slightest notice,—if notice it could be called, that he sometimes, when apparently deaf to the entreaties of every one else to swallow some nourishment or medicine, when she spoke, would hold out his hand for it, but without speaking or raising his eyes. Once or twice he was seen to look at her; but if she happened to meet his eyes, it seemed too much for him, and he slowly withdrew them. She

had indeed more than once inquired if it were not strange that, as his appetite and strength returned, he showed no farther signs of recovery : but her questions had been easily evaded, while the truth had yet never flashed on any of them.

When Major Vandeleur and Mr. Evelyn entered the room after the fatal communication had been made, the poor boy raised his eyes listlessly, and continued for a moment to look towards the door, as if he expected some one else to enter—probably Mr. C——; but, not perceiving him, he merely cast them down again, without the slightest uttered observation. His father sat down beside him.

“Do you miss your kind physician, my dearest Herbert?” he asked, fondly taking his hand between both his, and looking into his face.

The boy made no reply, but looked on him with an eye from which all intelligence was fled. His father continued : “He is returned to London ; he thinks you now quite well, my boy.”

No answer yet, save a weak and almost faint smile. His father, in the newly-awakened consciousness of his dreadful state, could endure it no longer, but, hastily rising, fled from the apartment, that he might not betray his emotion. The boy once more raised his eyes at the sudden movement ; and a faint tinge which came over his pale, gentle face, shot a ray of hope into the heart of Vandeleur, that even that faint blush betokened some natural emotion.

But, except this very faint indication, days and days passed on without the slightest change, except that, for the last two or three, he was heard to mutter to himself, but so low, or so incoherent, that no one wished to think they heard him aright : and when, as day by day they hung over him, and could not catch one connected sentence, even Gertrude began to experience a strange palpitation at her heart whenever he attempted to speak ; and he himself, poor fellow ! as if finding how ineffectual were his

efforts to make known his wishes, or to express his ideas, or else finding the effort too painful, abandoned it altogether, and fell back into his former listless and silent state. Gertrude now began to grow alarmed, without well knowing on what point to fix her fears. She asked why Mr. C—— had abandoned them? And on being told that he considered Herbert as nearly well, she sighed deeply, and once said, "I hope not!" And latterly, when he attempted any incoherent speech, she would fix her melancholy eyes on her father and Major Vandeleur alternately, with a look of such agonised and piercing inquiry, (as if to search the very truth of their souls,) that they not unfrequently found it very difficult to avoid replying to their touching language.

At last, as she came up one evening as usual from the dining-room to her brother's apartment before the gentlemen, and took her place beside his arm-chair, after contemplating him for a moment in anxious silence, she laid her hand

upon his arm, and endeavoured to attract his attention by asking him if he would like to hear her read to him. He turned slowly round, and softly pronounced, in a kind of whisper, the word "Gertrude."

It was the first time he had ever seemed to recognize any one by name; and the poor girl was so much affected by it, that she burst into tears, and, throwing herself into his arms, exclaimed, "Dearest, dearest Herbert!"

It appeared that even that gentle embrace was too rough for the slight dawn of recollection: he shuddered from her touch, and literally shaking with alarm and terror, he distinctly uttered the words "Go away."

Language cannot do justice to the poignancy of Gertrude's distress and disappointment at this deathblow to her newly-awakened hopes. She rushed out of the room, and meeting Major Vandeleur upon the stairs, she hid her face upon his shoulder, and sobbed forth, "Godfrey, my brother is—is—not himself!"

Vandeleur was deeply affected: he felt at once from her manner of uttering these words, that they were rather the confession of fears long entertained, than the transitory alarm of a moment. He folded her to his heart, and whispered every consolation that love could suggest. But it was all too late—the Rubicon was passed; and they talked and wept together over the loss of an intellect once so brilliant.

Gertrude was for some days nearly inconsolable, and was obliged to absent herself almost entirely from her brother's room, until her mind had become in some degree accustomed to view him in this new and heart-rending light. By degrees, however, the ardour and buoyancy of spirit natural to her age and character, aided by her lover's arguments, enabled her to rouse herself from the lethargy of despair, and she began to turn all her thoughts to how she might best "minister to the mind diseased." She soon succeeded in persuading herself, that where a being's whole heart, soul, mind, and feelings,

were concentrated on one object, it was not possible that he or she should not at last accomplish what was desired.

“Is not this the triumph of mind over matter,” she said, “of which I have sometimes heard my beloved Herbert speak?”

“Yes: but we must remember, dearest Gertrude,” said her lover, “that there is a Mind that can triumph over our minds, and whose ways are not always our ways.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

LONDON:
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Dorset-street, Fleet-street.



VANDELEUR;
OR,
ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

A NOVEL.

Ye shall have miracles, ay, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything but true.
Veiled Prophet.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1836.



VANDELEUR.

CHAPTER IX.

That work which most the public voice decries
Is still the fav'rite in its author's eyes ;
And thus you 'll find amid her infant host
The mother loves her idiot boy the most.

A.

MATTERS continued at Beauton Park pretty much as we left them in the last chapter, when Major Vandeleur's regiment was ordered to the south of Ireland. It now became necessary that he should renew the subject of his marriage with Gertrude, which, from delicacy towards the afflicted family, and deep sympathy in their sufferings, he had not touched upon since the fatal accident.

Gertrude had given him no credit for his forbearance ; for she had scarcely remembered his situation, in the tumult of her grief, until recalled to a recollection of it by his gently claiming a fulfilment of her engagement. She turned as pale as death.

“ What is the matter, my sweetest Gertrude ?” he asked, alarmed at the excess of her emotion.

She paused a moment ; then, fixing her eyes upon him, “ You do not—you cannot mean that you would remove me from Herbert as he is now ?” she replied.

Her lover felt embarrassed, and at a loss how to answer her, between the fear of awakening her alarm for the permanency of her brother’s bereavement, and that of appearing selfishly impatient to remove her from him in his present state.

She perceived his hesitation, and throwing her arms fondly, but pleadingly, round his neck, —“ No,” she said, “ my Godfrey loves me too

sincerely—loves Herbert too sincerely, for that: but to remove the temptation from you, I here solemnly swear in the presence of Heaven,” (falling on her knees as she spoke,) “that no entreaties shall induce me to become your wife until six months from this time are expired; and that any attempt on your part to dissuade me from this, or even any attempt to see me before then, after you shall have left England, I shall consider as unworthy of you as of myself. Give your mind to your professional duties, and I shall by that time know what we may have to expect, and shall either share with you my happiness, or seek consolation in your affection for my misery.”

She leaned her head against his knees, overcome by the excitement to which she had yielded. He attempted not to raise her; a death-pang shot across his heart. “Is it possible, after all, that she loves me not?” he asked himself, and felt nearly as he felt the morning that he parted with Lady Seaton in the saloon.

Gertrude, astonished at his silence, looked up; and when she saw the expression of agonized doubt upon his manly countenance, she sprang from her knees, and standing a moment before him, "You do not—no—it is not possible that you doubt my affection, Godfrey!" she exclaimed. "Oh, God! so deal with me, as I believe no woman ever yet loved as I love you!" and she clasped her hands, and raised her eyes to heaven.

Vandeleur folded her to his heart. "And how is it then, my Gertrude, that you can prefer anything to becoming my wife?" he whispered.

She raised her sweet eyes to his, as if considering how she could best explain to him her feelings; then, as if hopeless of making him understand them, she ejaculated, "Ah, Godfrey, it is evident you never had a brother or sister."

"The more then do I require a wife," he whispered again.

"And you shall have a wife, Godfrey," she

replied ; “ but not yet ! take her not believing that she neglects a sacred duty to become yours. Wait for a few short months ; go with your regiment to Ireland, fulfil the conditions I have imposed, and believe that at the end of that time I shall be ready either to return with you there, or wherever else your duty may call you.”

“ But, dearest Gertrude, if you will not accompany me now—and I scarcely intended to urge it—why will you not become mine before we part, and remain still to attend on our dear Herbert ?”

“ To what purpose, Godfrey ? Is it that the time and scene are so fitted for rejoicing ? or is it that I shall not have enough to occupy my thoughts without feeling myself a widowed bride ?—No, Godfrey, believe me I shall not so readily part with my husband ; and trust me, it will be more for your own happiness, as well as mine, to receive me when my mind can be more wholly yours.”

To these arguments, accompanied as they were by a gentle determination of manner, which she endeavoured to soften by half playful, half serious smiles, Vandeleur was forced to yield. Indeed, from the moment of her solemn vow he had very little hopes of being able to prevail with her to change her purpose ; and in a few days after this conversation he departed with his regiment for their new destination.

Poor Gertrude, in banishing her lover from her side, and exacting a solemn promise from him, that, unless recalled by herself, no other circumstance should induce him to make an attempt to see her again until six months should have elapsed, not only thought, in the enthusiasm of her young sorrow, that she had made a sort of propitiatory offering to poor Herbert ; but, more rationally, that she should by this absence have more time, and undivided thoughts and attention, to bestow on him. But, alas ! when days, weeks, months, passed over,

and she saw no change in that beloved object, she felt that time hung but too heavily on her hands. She had not even the usual excitements of the sick-room, the hopes and fears from hour to hour of some change either favourable or the reverse. There she sat from morn till night, watching the still gentle, uncomplaining, but listless and vacant countenance, until scarcely a hope lingered in her own breast that it ever would become even intelligent enough to thank her, and yet she had no one on whose breast to lay her head and weep.

Her lover's letters, indeed, were affectionate, consoling, and generally entertaining; yet they could afford little more than a temporary relief to one whose youthful spirits were sinking under the pressure of a misfortune ever before her eyes.

Her father, too, whose good-humour was rather derived from animal organization, than command or buoyancy of mind, began to droop under the loss of the field-sports, which to him

were as food and light, but which he had almost totally abandoned since his son's bereavement ; and though kinder in his manner to his daughter than heretofore, yet so new was he to sorrow himself, and so unused to bestow tenderness upon her, that he was angry at her melancholy, because it brought that sorrow to his mind, and his very caresses generally ended in reproaches which drove her from him in tears.

Miss Wilson, who still hung on amongst them, was the only one who did not seem to sink beneath the visitation ; but still, though she was, if not kinder, certainly more attentive and watchful in the sick-room than perhaps might have been expected, there was nothing in her dull and unswerving placidity to check or to repel the gloom of which she seemed insensible, while it usurped so fearful a dominion over the other members of the lately happy family. Winter, too, had set in in its most depressing form,—of sleet, and dark inces-

sant rain ; and, while this precluded all refreshment to the jaded spirits from without, close confinement, and consuming anxiety within, began at last to make inroads upon the hitherto unbroken health of Gertrude. This did not serve to enliven the scene ; and such was the state to which the nerves of the whole family were at last reduced, that they all agreed in the belief that never before were such hideous howlings of the wintry blast heard around the house of Beauton, or amid its leafless trees. When once the nerves are in a state to be at all affected by this, there are few things produce a more painful impression upon them ; but it is one, the force of which can be fully conceived only in a large, dreary, and nearly uninhabited mansion in the country.

In the midst of this gloom, sickness, and depression, a letter arrived from Lady Augusta Starling, who had gone early in the winter to a dowager aunt of hers in London, whose old-

fashioned habits still prompted her to fly the country with the last green leaf, and seek the warmth and shelter of the metropolis.

The wisest cannot foresee what will eventually tend to their advantage. Lady Augusta would have been extremely well pleased to have deferred her visit to a later period; but her aunt pretty plainly intimated to her, that if she intended as heretofore to make the house in Berkeley-square her home during the whole of the *belle-season*, she must make up her mind to endure it also for a part of the *dowager-season*; and she was forced to comply. The consequence was, that when other fair anglers were only beginning to weave their *nets* and *gauzes* for the coming season, Lady Augusta wrote to inform Gertrude that she was already converting hers into her wedding gown.

"And now, Gertrude," continued the lively young lady, after very kind and anxious inquiries, "comes the pith of the story. You must be my bridesmaid;—nay, do not start, or shrink. The

matter stands thus : married in London I cannot be ; people would either say that I took the man at a week's notice, *en passant*, or that I remained in town out of season on purpose to catch any stray creature that happened for his own misfortune to be passing through. Now, as I like neither of these alternatives, I have determined upon retiring to 'cool shades and purling brooks.' What though the shades may be of Lapland temperature just now, and the purling brooks swollen to roaring torrents, — still, however, they may *feel*, they will *sound* pretty well ; and people may then suppose, you know, that the victim came down to shoot or hunt with papa, and when he thought he had been most successful, only brought home a wounded *hart* for his pains :—may that pass ? However, in addition to all these wise reasons, papa chooses that the *wedding* should take place at the old mansion ; because, as Cranberry is in Paris, there is nobody here to *give me away*, and all that ; and papa says he would rather see me die an old maid

than come up from the foxes and hares just now : so, Gertrude, consent *you must*. I shall say nothing of Lord Luscombe but what I suppose you know already ; that he is just returned from his embassy to the court of T * * * *, &c. honours which are never conferred on *boys* : but then, you know, I am very steady. Adieu ! dearest Gertrude,

Ever yours,

A. S.

“ P.S. Remember, I do not consider that a bridesmaid fulfils her duty unless she watches by the bride during the *honey-moon* at least, to brush away any little imperfections that might turn the honey into gall during that important season.”

“ How did this letter come ? ” said Gertrude to her father, observing that there was no post-mark on it.

“ It came under cover to me,” he replied. “ She wrote to me also, to beg I would if possible enforce her request.”

“ But I hope you have no thoughts of doing so, my dear father. Lady Augusta can be at no loss for friends on this occasion ; and indeed, indeed, sir, I have neither spirits nor inclination for such scenes at present.”

“ Why, that’s the very reason, child, she wishes you to go. Paris is such a gay dashing place just now, that they say it would put a frog into spirits.”

“ Paris, sir ! — why do you mention Paris ? ”

“ What ! why, did she not mention it to you ? Nay, then, perhaps I have said it too soon : but, hang me ! if she could have hit on a worse schemer or manœuvrer in the world to second her than myself ; even Miss Wilson would have done better. But the short and the long of it is this, Gertrude ; she goes for a month to Paris immediately after the wedding, and she insists upon your accompanying her ; and, I must say, I think it would do you a great deal of good.”

“ My dear father, I would not think of it for worlds !”

“ That ’s agreeable, when I say I wish that you should.”

“ I did not hear you say so, sir ; but, even so, I am sure you will think better of it. I could not leave Herbert in such a state.”

“ Why, what good are you doing him ? God knows, if you were, I would be the last to bid you go ; but as you cannot do him any good, I wish very much you would go. You know very well Mr. C. in his last visit said you were the patient yourself now, and that change of scene was absolutely necessary for you. It ’s quite enough to see one of you dying, or worse than dying, before my eyes.—Come, don’t cry, Gertrude, there ’s a good girl ! Think of what I’ve said.” And muttering “ I can’t stand this !” he hastily left the room.

Lady Augusta herself arrived a few days after to reiterate her petition ; but not all that she could urge, nor all that Mr. C., in answer

to a letter from her father, could prescribe, had the slightest weight with Gertrude, until a letter arrived from her lover, written in a tone of real alarm at the accounts her father had given him of her health, and assuring her that if she did not consent to try change of air and scene, which the present favourable opportunity offered to her, he should not only consider her as failing in her regard for his happiness, but should consider himself released from his promise, and bound to fly to her immediately, to urge by his presence all that his wishes in absence failed to effect.

“For my sake!” (those irresistible words from lips we love)—“For my sake! go, my Gertrude,” he continued. “Every one that can, ought to see Paris at this interesting moment, when the national feeling is in a ferment that casts up all its peculiarities in turn. Depend upon it, that after this it will subside, and, by constant and friendly intercourse with England, in time become so assimilated with us, that little of interest will remain in visiting it. Go,

then, my dearest, that I may always have to boast of *my wife* having seen it,—not in its glory, but ere yet the shadow of its glory had passed from the earth. And let me whisper, that as three months of my probation are over, and my happiness is to be crowned within three more, it will be a pity to lose such an opportunity for making up such a *trousseau* as shall enable you to kill as many ladies by envy of your *dress*, as I shall gentlemen by envy of *my wife*. Farewell, dearest! Date your next letter except one from Paris.”

Vandeleur’s wishes, thus urged, were not to be resisted; but even in giving her consent to Lady Augusta she betrayed the effort it was to her spirits, and how gladly she would have been spared it.

“And do you really love Lord Luscombe, Augusta?—a man old enough to be your father!” she asked, as if almost in hopes still to escape, even by rendering her friend dissatisfied with her own prospects.

“ I really love his rank and station in life : nay, Gertrude, don't look so shocked. Well, then, I really like all I've known of him ; and he is very well esteemed as to character, and all my family liked the match, and I'm very dutiful and obedient. Now is not that the way to say it ? What ! not a smile yet ? Why, you are really sadly changed, my poor Gertrude.”

“ I am indeed, Augusta,” said the poor girl, bursting into tears, “ and I fear you will heartily repent of the companion you have chosen ;—but it is not yet too late ?”

“ Nay, that is not kind, dear Gertrude. Though not a very old creature myself, yet I know how much change of scene produces change of feeling ; and I look to giving you back to Godfrey the blooming bride he first courted.”

A faint smile and as faint a blush were now just visible.

“ And I assure you, Gertrude, that is part

of my motive for being so very urgent, after you expressed so much dislike to the plan. But you must second me yourself, and not refuse to be amused."

"I shall certainly at least not keep out of the way of it, and will promise to do all in my power, dear, kind Augusta, that you may not repent of your good-nature."

As the time for the marriage to take place now rapidly approached, Gertrude grew, if possible, more assiduous than ever about her brother. At least she changed the course of her assiduity; and all the affectionate tenderness she had hitherto delighted in exercising towards him herself, she now as anxiously laboured to instil into Miss Wilson: there was not an hour in the day in which she did not endeavour to impress upon her how much his safety depended on the most affectionate attention and watchfulness. That impression was probably beyond the poor woman's limited intellect to retain; but Gertrude saw with delight, that the

force of habit and obedience seemed very tolerably to supply the place of feeling ; and what she had now seen Gertrude do for months, she seemed able enough to follow. And alas ! the state in which Herbert continued seemed to require but little more.

He now seldom uttered a distinct sentence, or manifested the least desire to move about ; and as the weather was by no means such as to induce them to put any force on his inclinations, he sat from morning till night in his arm-chair, in a kind of dreamy state of existence ; as if the vital spark still lingered, but in its very lowest proportion.

Still, although Gertrude felt better satisfied with Miss Wilson's attention than she perhaps expected, she could not prevail on herself to commit so precious a charge to one of her calibre, who, if any change should take place, would certainly never think it called for a change of treatment ;—nor yet to her anxious, but impatient and unskilful father. When,

therefore, she first made up her mind to accompany Lady Augusta, she immediately wrote, with her father's consent, to old Mr. Mason, to mention the circumstances of the family, and to entreat that he would return to watch over his beloved pupil in her absence.

“And now take care, Miss Wilson,” Mr. Evelyn said with a gravity and seriousness which he knew would have due weight with her, and which now were more consonant to his feelings than jesting,—“take care that I hear no more of your outrageous attacks upon the poor old man; for I tell you plainly, that, by the Lord! he never shall again leave my house for you—if indeed he will consent to enter it while you are here.”

Miss Wilson hung her head; and, exactly as a child of ten years old might do when reprimanded for a fault, she said in a low voice, “I will not, sir, say any more to him!”

Not a word had been heard of Mr. Mason since he left Beanton Park. In the first days

of affliction no one thought of the poor old man ; and when at last Vandeleur recollected and wrote to him, he never seemed to have taken any notice of the letter. Gertrude wrote again in the course of the winter, still without producing a reply ; but as she could not for a moment do him the injustice to attribute this silence either to forgetfulness of his affection for Herbert, or want of sympathy in his misfortune, she set it down either to some accident to himself, or some *oddity*—too inexperienced to know that *oddities* of his sort are only odd in manner or expression, never in feeling. Indeed the very word *odd* on human lips, which are so prone to speak evil, should be (and perhaps is) much more generally understood to imply something above, rather than below, the common ; something which inferior minds cannot exactly comprehend, and yet, instinctively feeling that it is above censure, satisfy their consciences by the word “ *odd*.”

As poor Gertrude, however, had no feelings

of envy towards Mr. Mason, and was willing to give him credit for all that was good and kind, she now wrote again on the eve of her departure, and was preparing to leave home next morning with a very heavy heart indeed, when the old man himself arrived ; but so worn and so altered, that every one started at his appearance. On being questioned, however, he merely said that he had not been well all the winter, and was a little fatigued by the journey.

“ A little !—why, you seem scarcely able to stand,” said Mr. Evelyn.

“ I shall be better presently, sir,” he said, as he sank almost fainting into a chair.

Gertrude brought him a glass of wine, which he hastily swallowed, and seemed to revive a little.

“ But what has been the matter, Mr. Mason ?” Mr. Evelyn asked : “ you were so very healthy all the time you were here.”

Mr. Mason only smiled.

"Did you get Major Vandeleur's first letter?" asked Gertrude.

"I did," he replied; and no one cared to inquire further the cause of his long illness. The old man never had loved any one else since the days of his youth.

When after some time he requested to see his beloved pupil, the meeting between them was affecting to the last degree. He entered the room shaking from head to foot, from all the cautions that had been given him not to alarm the youth. Herbert did not for some time notice his entrance; at last Gertrude said, "Dearest Herbert, there is your dear Mr. Mason come to see you." He raised his eyes very slowly, a faint colour came to his cheek, and a slight movement of his lips was perceptible. Mr. Mason had to be carried from the room, and from the adjoining apartments altogether, that his sobs might not reach his pupil's ears. He retired almost immediately to bed; and as

the wedding was to take place early next day, Gertrude saw him no more.

Though much affected by the scene of the evening before, she rose that morning with lightened spirits at leaving her beloved brother with so kind and so anxious a friend, and flattered herself that his own exhaustion was chiefly produced by over-exertion after illness. Previous to setting out, she stole into her brother's room ; but, as he still slept, she only knelt by his side for a moment, and uttered a prayer for his safety ; then taking an affectionate farewell of her father, and repeating her cautions to Miss Wilson, she stepped into the carriage, and was borne to a scene how different from that she left behind her ! A bright and lovely early spring morning, together with a letter from her lover, put into her hands by a servant returning from the post town, thanking her in the most affectionate and grateful terms for her compliance, served to cheer and enliven her, and

she arrived at Lord Foxhill's mansion in tolerable spirits.

The wedding took place immediately on her arrival ; and in about an hour afterwards, Lord and Lady Luscombe, Gertrude, and their respective attendants, set out for Paris.

" I see you brought no maid, Gertrude," said Lady Luscombe.

" No : you know it was agreed that I should have Mrs. Whitecross as soon as you provided yourself with a French one ; so I thought it unnecessary to bring another : besides, you know, we settled I should not."

" Yes, but I half repent it now ; for the moment I told Whitecross that she was to go to live with *Mrs. Vandeleur*, she got into such ecstasies, that I expect very little comfort from her *en attendant*. I think she considers you her lady already ; at least, she certainly considers Vandeleur her lord."

" How do you mean ?"

"That she really almost worships him. I never heard one human being speak of another as she does of him."

"You are so kind, dear Augusta, to try to lead me to chat on what you think an inspiring subject; but I promised you I should exert myself, and I assure you I feel much better, much less miserable, already, than I should have thought possible; so choose some topic in which Lord Luscombe can join," (and she smiled across to him,) "and you shall see how well I shall behave."

"Come, then, my lord, do tell us some of the sights you have seen in your wanderings over the world," said his bride.

"I am too much charmed with the sight before me, to think of looking back."

"Oh, but as it would not be very pretty in us to return the compliment, pray have pity on us."

"I should then rather you would look forward than back."

"Still," said she, affecting to stretch her head forwards towards the opposite seat, where Lord Luscombe sat with his back to the horses, "still I can see but the one object, your lordship."

"And is that not enough, Augusta?"

"Why, really now that is the most conceited, or else the most ill-bred, speech I ever heard. Either it is addressed to Miss Evelyn as well as me, in which case it is conceited; or else you have entirely forgotten that her eyes may require refreshment while your own are feasting so luxuriously, which is very ill-bred."

"I believe I had best leave this whimsical girl to you, Miss Evelyn," said Lord Luscombe, smiling; "I seldom can make anything of her."

In such sort of conversation, if conversation it may be called, the time passed over. Lord and Lady Luscombe, though both well-meaning, and "fair to pass" as to intellect, were neither of them gifted with real talents for conversation. Lady Luscombe could always rattle on upon whatever was passing before her at the moment,

but seldom had the power of deeply engaging the attention; and Lord Luscombe, on the contrary, though a man of the world, had just enough of tact to *describe well* most of what he had seen as *sights*, but never had attained to deducing a single new idea from them; and as at this moment his thoughts were, as he said himself, more engaged upon the present than the past, he was not particularly entertaining to his companions.

Still the time did pass on, and they arrived without accident, or annoyance, in what was then, and for many years afterwards, considered the gayest city in Europe.

CHAPTER X.

On Apathy's cold brink,
To seize the soul, and teach it how to think ;
To tell of Nature's wonders, till the lot
Of self, with all its mimic care's forgot ;
And new creations open on the soul,
With bursts of joy beyond this world's control ;
Till the freed spirit, purified, refined,
Leaves puny woes and discontent behind,
To seek at last the goal they cannot reach :—
This is the true morality to teach.

ANONYMOUS.

IN Paris, as it was at that period, what a completely new view of life presented itself to Gertrude! who, until launched at once with her gay friend into the gayest circles, composed of visitors from almost every civilized nation in the world, had scarcely ever wandered beyond the precincts of her own domain.

Lord Luscombe had visited Paris once before in an official character, which, with other circumstances, ensured his party being received at once into the very first circles even of foreign society. And certainly nothing could be more interesting to every class of intellect than the society then to be enjoyed in Paris. For the gay, there were unusual excitement and variety ; for the contemplative, there was a panorama of events, such as one lifetime could never hope to comprise again ; for the philosopher, there was food for study in the impulses which had brought about such mighty changes ; for the old, there was the hope of peace—for the young, the hope of war ; but no class, no sex, no age, was left in a state of dull stagnation. And between the *tours de valse*s, the deepest subjects of political interests were discussed by lips that until then had only opened to pronounce upon a ballet or an opera : people's minds were kept on the stretch in the gayest coterie ; and this is the real charm of society.

For the first few days Gertrude moved about sad and pensive ; she was terrified and grieved to find herself so far from Herbert, and—from Vandeleur. But, of all human beings, hers was the nature least calculated to resist the influence of pleasure and excitement. It happened that, amongst the accomplishments upon which Gertrude's mother had prided herself, was that of speaking French fluently,—an accomplishment then less a matter of course than it is at present. This she had in her first days of industry imparted to her children ; and the habit of speaking to them in that language once acquired, she had never totally abandoned, especially with her daughter. The consequence was, that though still far from speaking the language correctly or elegantly, Gertrude found herself at as little loss to understand, or make herself understood, in Paris, as most English women did who visited it at that time. In addition to the facility this acquirement afforded her of forming acquaintances, and enjoying the

society of foreigners, several of Lord Luscombe's friends were amongst those who had for many years found refuge in England from the distractions of their own country, and who had, while there, received hospitality and kindness from his family ;—good offices which were by many forgotten, but which by many also were warmly remembered, and repaid as far as circumstances admitted. Altogether Gertrude was as favourably placed for enjoying all that is supposed to constitute enjoyment to the youthful mind, as external matters could ensure. .

Nor did she remain insensible to their cheering influence. By degrees her courage and her spirits recovered their tone ; her father was careful to write no depressing accounts of Herbert ; and by the time that Lord Luscombe's party had been a fortnight or three weeks in Paris, Gertrude found herself an object of universal attention and admiration in the circles in which they moved, and had even found it ne-

cessary, with a blushing cheek, to request of Lady Luscombe to suffer her engagement with Vandeleur to be generally understood. This precaution, seconded by her own delicate and retiring manners, had the effect of freeing her from several professed admirers, especially amongst her own countrymen; and, without this unwholesome food for female vanity, there still remained plenty to interest and delight her.

It has been said that Gertrude's education (as it is called) had been rather desultory, and such as her natural aversion from study or sedentary habits left very imperfect: but that very dislike to study, when joined to, and proceeding from, eagerness and vivacity of mind and perception, as it did in her, rendered her the more susceptible of, and delighted with, whatever information or new ideas she could acquire independent of that study. At Beaumont this enjoyment was almost denied her,—indeed was one of which she scarcely knew

the existence; but when launched into the enlightened, *spirituel* circles of Parisian life, where the mysteries of nature were turned into children's toys, and the *bourgeois* who sold them could lecture on their properties, she really began to feel as if she had only then begun to live. Yet far was this feeling from bringing any coolness in her faithful heart to those she had loved and left; the only effect it produced towards them, was to make her wonder how they could so much have loved one so far beneath them; and she determined, during her short excursion, like the bee, to gather all the treasure that she could from every one who was willing to impart it, and carry it all faithfully home to her own hive.

It will readily be conceived that this vivacity of mind, and intelligent delight in everything she saw, were, in so young and so lovely a girl, beheld by liberal, polished, and enlightened persons with interest and indulgence; and many a gentleman, whose gallantries and personal

compliments she had effectually repressed, passed a delightful evening in describing to her the principles of some ingenious toy, or showing her some beautiful chemical experiment.

The effect of all this on her mind was inconceivable to those who from their earlier years have been familiar with such intellectual enjoyments; it was delicious—it was intoxicating. Her ideas of the powers of the human mind became exalted, and, with the enthusiasm of youth and inexperience, she could scarcely be persuaded, that where so many wonders had been discovered, all should not in time become so; and to the question, “Why should they not?” it was not in the power, still less was it the interest, of those who excited these emotions, to reply.

Much that they taught her was true and valuable, but many unproved theories were also presented to her; and her principles of cultivation, if we may be allowed the expression, were not sufficiently matured to distinguish between

them, where all was received on trust by her; and, alas! she had no friend at hand to guide her through the dangerous, because dazzling, paths of scientific speculation. To Lord and Lady Luscombe, indeed, she sometimes mentioned her new field of enjoyment; but they, though politely attentive to what she said, were too prudent to hazard an opinion where they had never had an idea, and only rejoiced that she had found anything so fully to absorb her attention.

Amongst the persons of the French *noblesse* who had received attentions from the family of Lord Luscombe in England, was the Count De l'Espoir, an ancient and respectable nobleman, but who had fallen under the displeasure of the demons of the Revolution, and who had suffered so severely, that while in exile in England, and reduced in many instances to what he considered degradation, he affected the incognito, and assumed the name of De Brons. He had returned to his country and gleaned up the remains

of his property; and though he was now no more, his only son procured an introduction to Lord Luscombe's house, under the pretext of returning thanks for the civility his family had received when in England. He was that same De Brons, now the Count De l'Espoir, from whose snares Vandeleur had rescued the present Mrs. Whitecross when Sally Henshawe.

In very early youth young De l'Espoir had evinced talents of no ordinary class; and as his father was anxious to afford him every advantage for cultivating them, he procured, as his tutor, a young German student, who had come to Paris on a visit to a sister of his married there: but who, liking the gaieties of that city, and its stirring interests, better than the life he led in his own country-home, decided upon remaining there; and in order to enable himself to do so, found it necessary to draw largely on his own talents to procure the means.

Nature had by no means been niggardly to Edelstein: he was born without any dangerous

or leading passion, and with a fair proportion of the ingenuity and talent of his country; but circumstances had been unfavourable to him. He came to Paris a young and inexperienced man, if not in love with virtue, certainly unused to vice: but such, at that period, was the state of society there, that to look on, and be able to snatch what was good from such a furnace of evil, and not perish in the attempt, required a firmer character and more settled principles than were those of the young German student. He explored the depths of human nature indeed, but without the safety-lamp of true philosophy; and though he perished not, he fell into that moral lethargy from the effects of which he never afterwards recovered. He succeeded, however, in snatching some glittering particles from the mine; and though mingled with much dross, and earthy impurities, they yet shone sufficiently to enable him, after some time, to offer himself as the instructor of youth.

Fate threw him in the way of the Count De l'Espoir, who engaged him for his only son, then a boy about twelve years of age. Very soon after this arrangement was made, the Revolution broke out ; and when it became necessary for the count to fly from that country and carry his son with him, Edelstein having little inducement to remain behind, and being very greedy in the pursuit of novelty, implored permission to follow his fortunes.

They came to England, and the Count De l'Espoir was but too happy to accept of such hospitality as his rank, and unmerited misfortunes, procured him from the English, on his own behalf, and to place his son at a school where he might still pursue his education. The German tutor was separated from his patron for a time, and after continuing for about two years to procure a precarious livelihood by his talents, he determined upon taking orders, as a means of increasing his respectability ; and with some difficulty got himself ordained by an ex-bishop

of France, at the instance of the Count De l'Espoir.

It is not to be supposed that such motives, and followed by no active duties, could produce much influence upon his character; or, without more interest than he possessed, upon his worldly fortunes; he continued, therefore, the same unsteady, wild, and fanciful creature he had ever been, trifling with the deepest mysteries of nature, and only sipping enough of each to render them dangerous to himself and others, until after a few years, the course of events placed him as an usher at the same school in ——shire where young De l'Espoir now was, in the sort of intermediate position between pupil and teacher: that is, the terms of education were lowered in his favour, on account of the purity and correctness of his French accent.

Hitherto De l'Espoir, at the different schools he had been at, had passed as a sort of character, whom, if nobody praised, every one

seemed afraid to blame. An odd, startling sort of daringness now and then broke out in his sentiments, and even in his conduct ; but as he quickly was able to restrain the one, and to turn the other off in a satirical laugh, people were willing to pass him by as—a Frenchman.

When, however, Edelstein appeared at Mr. Hamilton's school, the scene was changed. The long-smothered fire broke out under the sanction of a coadjutor ; and the German and the Frenchman, though very unlike in natural disposition, thus meeting in a foreign land, became linked in bonds of friendship far beyond those necessarily attendant on their former acquaintance. Nothing, indeed, could be more opposite than were the characters of the two young men. It might almost have been supposed that they had each been changed at their birth ; for while the German was animated, volatile, and unsteady, the Frenchman was deep, reflective, cool, and designing. But as if each, by myste-

rious sympathy, recognised his own proper nature in the other, they became firmest friends ; and this fatal friendship gave the last puff to the already waning lamp of Hans Edelstein's principles.

De l'Espoir had deeply felt his family's fall ; but he felt it only in their loss of wealth as the means of enjoyment, and his earliest thoughts turned to the possibility of supplying that want. While yet in his boyhood, he had sounded several of the companions whom chance threw in his way upon these means ; but the plain and plodding honesty of John Bull, and the happy circumstances of English youth, rendered them alike unable and unwilling to understand or to second his schemes. For a time he suffered those visions to slumber, or was forced to conceal them within his own breast, and endeavoured to make himself amends by such amusements as were within his reach. But no sooner did his German tutor re-appear, than he found in him a spirit ready to minister to whatever

devices his still young but dangerous ambition should suggest. The circumstances of the times, and their own absolute poverty and want of friends in a foreign country, rendered political intrigue totally out of their reach ; but they turned all their attention to making some such figure in the occult sciences, so little practised in England at that time, and in which the German was an adept, as should, in the first instance, procure them some money, for the right use of which they determined to trust to circumstances.

Matters were just at this pass between them, when chance introduced young Vandeleur to the notice of the Marquis of Hampton. His account of the foreigners had sufficient weight with that nobleman to induce him to write to Mr. Hamilton on the subject. The consequence was a strict investigation, and prohibition of all studies that were not submitted to his inspection. This for a short time seemed to produce the desired cessation ; but

before any more permanent effects could ensue from it, that political period arrived which enabled the Count De l'Espoir and his son to return to their native country.

They did return ; but not so did their ancient possessions return to them : and young De l'Espoir, with deep and bitter discontent, saw himself so confined in his means, as to have little more enjoyment in his power than when, half tutor, half pupil at Mr. Hamilton's school, he endeavoured to subvert the principles of a beautiful and innocent girl. Once more he turned his dark mind to its own resources, and instead of pursuing the broad and noble path of science, which might have led him to wealth, and certainly to honour, he wrote to his *ci-devant* tutor to rejoin him, and together they recommenced, in a city the most favourable to their wild and secret practices, their endeavours to win by trick, device, and experiment, from the ignorant and the credulous, that notoriety and emolument which, with a little more time and

study, they might have commanded, by the force of truth and the power of knowledge, from the highest and the noblest.

For some time their machinations served little other purpose than to afford them amusement and the means of low intrigue. But at length, and suddenly, an accident occurred ; a report was spread : a life fell the sacrifice to some mysterious chemical experiment which, professing to bestow immortality, only kept the pledge by dismissing the spirit from its mortal tabernacle. There were some dark attending circumstances about a will, and the matter called for legal investigation. De l'Espoir had friends in power, and was still a young man. Edelstein was declared the criminal, and fled once more from Paris for his life. This fearful event, which took place a few years before Gertrude visited Paris, acted as a temporary sedative upon De l'Espoir—on his father as a lasting one. The old man sank beneath the shock ; and the young count contrived to cover, by his new title, the blot

upon his name. He had now grown wiser by experience, and the visions of youth having faded before added years, he determined to turn from theory to practice, from mind to matter; and when the peace with England sent its loveliest and its wealthiest flocking to Paris, he began to recollect its "smiling homes," and to think that, as he was a remarkably handsome man and still in the prime of life, he could not do better than give his title in exchange for some of their fertile acres. Fortune hitherto had been unfavourable to him; for besides that his own possessions were by no means so ample as to induce any parent to covet his alliance, his was not a character to win the love of woman; there was too much of cold, selfish, worldly calculation about it. He was one of those persons who contrive to hold their place in society despite a certain instinct which prevails amongst men to their disadvantage, and to be well received by women, but never to be an object of their love.

He was without principles ; but, as he was also without ardent feelings, he was never hurried by their impulse into any flagrant vice ; and, taught caution by added years and unsuccessful youth, he now was rather one who looked steadily forward to the time when some happy hit should enable him to indulge his passions or propensities without control, than one who yielded headlong to their impulse, perhaps to be as quickly arrested by some mercifully counter-acting feeling. He played, but it was still with the same cold caution that marked his whole demeanour : he neither lost his money nor his character—the one was nearly as precious to him as the other. Not that he was a miser ; on the contrary, he merely valued money as the instrument of his pleasures—his passport into good society—and his character—for the same reason !

Such was the man who, on plea of the civilities which his father had received from the family of Lord Luscombe, got himself intro-

duced to the young, innocent, and inexperienced Gertrude. He, like the rest, had heard of her engagement; but as, at the same time, he also heard of her large fortune, and that only a sickly youth, her very affectionate brother, stood between her and a princely one, he did not, like others, resign his boldest hopes. What to better-principled minds seemed an insurmountable barrier between her and them, to him only appeared to reduce his competitors or rivals from infinity to *one*.

“*Sauve qui peut !*” cried he. “Scared by the phantom of a woman’s faith, the field will be all the clearer for me.”

He inquired if her *fiancé* were in Paris; and on learning that he was not, he considered the field already won.

A more modest man might also have been staggered by witnessing, as he did, Gertrude’s quiet but decided rejection of all personal adulation, from whatever source presented; and her innocent assumption of matronly dignity, when

not thrown off her guard by her youthful and enthusiastic feelings : but it produced no other effect on him, than to show him that the usual avenue to women's hearts was closed up with her, and that therefore he must make another for himself.

It is not to be supposed that one so deeply interested, should long remain ignorant of the delight which the poor girl took in literary conversation ; and Paris itself scarcely afforded a person more perfectly qualified to catch and entrance the attention of one at once so intelligent, and so uncultivated, as Gertrude was. His own daringness of fancy,—want of loyalty, as it were, in the cause of science,—and the innumerable theories of which he had tasted in his youth, gave him weapons with which to assail her imagination, as bright, and various, as they were subtle and dangerous.

The road to her attention thus once discovered, he determined to shut it up from all competitors ; and in the evening *conversazione*

in the gardens of the Tuileries, the ride in the Bois de Boulogne, or the enchanting lounge of the Louvre, he was ever at her side, and ever pouring into her ear some interesting or amusing fact or theory. Still she dreamt not of danger or imprudence. Vandeleur and De l'Espoir were beings so unlike, that by any accident they had never yet even crossed each other in her mind. Nor was De l'Espoir unaware of this. The stake for which he played was too deep not to render him quick-sighted; and when another fortnight passed over, and he found that he had not made the slightest advance in her affections, or even interested her vanity, he perceived that he must either change his plans, or be content to find himself a mere benevolent, disinterested instructor to a beautiful young girl. The character neither pleased nor suited him; and, albeit he was not used either to despond, or quickly to abandon any scheme he had once adopted, he was for some days absolutely at a loss on what point to assail her with the remotest prospect or even chance of success. A

mere accidental circumstance revealed to him that point.

It happened that, one evening at a gentleman's house, where there were but few persons assembled, Gertrude, looking over the few books and pamphlets that lay scattered about, took up a report upon the effects of ANIMAL MAGNETISM. She had heard some odd rumours in England of something of the kind, but always heard it spoken of with the greatest contempt and derision : even Vandeleur, she remembered, had joined in the laugh, and pronounced it nothing but French or German humbug. This, of course, did not tend to excite her interest in the subject, and it had probably never again crossed her imagination until chance threw in her way this publication ; but then, great indeed was her astonishment to perceive, signed to it, one or two names of the leading medical men of the day, and whose talents and high acquirements she had heard both English and French alike extol.

“What in the world is this?” said she, pointing it out to De l’Espoir, who, as usual, was hovering about her. He received the pamphlet from her hand, looked at it for a moment, and before he found words to reply to her fate-teeming question, he felt an instinctive conviction that she had at last herself pointed out to him the snare in which alone she could be caught.

De l’Espoir had been for years in England; he was of course aware of the prejudices that even a few years ago existed much more strongly than they do now, against almost everything French, but especially against what was called French quackery, and French philosophy.

Happily those prejudices are fading away: the word *French* no longer is synonymous with *false*; and people at last have learned to try a medicine, a doctrine, or a theory, by some other test than that of French and English. But they did exist, and perhaps never in greater force than when De l’Espoir was receiving

or imparting instruction there. Indeed, he had suffered from them himself: for even before the Marquis of Hampton had taken the trouble of making Mr. Hamilton aware of the dangerous inmates he harboured amongst his pupils, De l'Espoir found himself looked upon with an eye of suspicion by the pupils, and even shunned and dreaded as some one possessed of unhallowed powers. This, of course, he remembered still, and was well aware of the caution that would be necessary, in order not to scare away the timid stranger-bird, that now came fluttering round the dangerous snare to examine its contents.

Before he made up his mind in what way to answer her, she had run her eye over another, and another, startling instance of the cures effected, or said to be effected, by the power of the human will, and sympathies, over the energies of another. She was confounded, and again exclaimed, "Do explain to me, if you can, what all this means, signed by G—— and

D——, &c. &c. names that are esteemed alike by us and you, on a subject which I thought only tolerated by fools or madmen? But perhaps it is not one with which you are even acquainted?"

The count smiled gently, and looked down. "I believe," he said at last, "it is scarcely too much to say, that few are better acquainted with it."

And it was true. It was one of those theories which in his youth had engaged much of his attention; and if it had not led to cures for others, had led to many a wild adventure for himself. It had of late been laid aside, with other pursuits unbecoming his new rank and station in society, and indeed was only practised now, by any one in Paris, in secrecy and obscurity: still, now and then, such startling effects did take place, and such wonderful cures were occasionally effected through its medium, from whatever cause, that some liberal-minded physicians could not refuse their testimony to the facts;

while one or two men, whose extensive talents and research were patents in themselves, even ventured to write in favour of the theory.

By degrees, and with a skill worthy of a better cause, De l'Espoir put Gertrude in possession of these circumstances; and when he saw, through her liquid eyes, the holy hope that was kindling up in her enthusiastic soul, as he adroitly and delicately drew her attention to its influence in all nervous cases, or affections of the head, her own heart did not bound more tumultuously at the thought of its being serviceable to her beloved brother, than did his at seeing how insensibly she was suffering herself to be at least made accustomed to the ideas he wished to instil into her mind. It was all he aimed at for the present; and, changing the conversation that she might not be able to suspect his object in it, he determined to wait with patience until she should again lead to it herself.

Alas! it was not long before she did so: the hints he had thrown out, the facts he had re-

lated, were to her of a nature too deeply interesting to leave them unexamined. He of course followed as she led, and even, when he could do so with effect, took a stride before her; and though she never yet had spoken to him of her brother's health, he plainly perceived that every question, every idea, and every throb of her heart had but the one object. He waited with palpitating anxiety, but at the same time with consummate art and caution, until she should make it known to him herself; while beforehand he made it his business, by every indirect means within his reach, to put himself in full possession of every particular relating to the boy's malady, and to the general circumstances of the family. This enabled him constantly to give such a turn, and such a colour, to every instance he related of the effects of animal magnetism, as exalted the poor girl's enthusiastic hopes to the highest; and at last, one day, with a blushing countenance, and eyes humid, from the excess of her emotion, and the

delicacy of the communication, she informed him of the state in which her brother languished, and of the hope that had sprung up within her heart.

De l'Espoir received her communication with all the skilful tact of one, at once deeply interested, and prepared beforehand for it. He seemed at first scarcely to encourage her in thinking of the undertaking; but, with the difficulties and the obstacles which he pointed out, he managed to blend so artfully the certainty of success if they could but be surmounted, that he fully succeeded, even to his own satisfaction, in fixing, instead of removing, her anxiety to try it.

Still there were moments when her clear understanding, unformed and immatured as it was, suggested to her the improbability that any art, science, power, or whatever its nature might be, so beneficial in its effects on human beings, should remain so long, at the least, a matter of doubt, if not of ridicule, to almost all

the enlightened part of mankind. But what is the theory so extravagant that may not, by clever and interested casuists, be surrounded with arguments to dazzle and bewilder, if not for the moment to win over to its side, the youthful mind, to which every new idea is almost alike wonderful and extraordinary? And how long is it before the young and vigorous intellect is convinced that its own powers are not creative ! or can believe, where so much is taken on trust, that any one has ascertained where the limits should be laid !

In the present expanding state of Gertrude's faculties and ideas, she was particularly exposed to this danger ; for she really felt it to be almost presumption in her, to attempt to question the probability of any theory, merely by the force of her own weak powers of reasoning or comprehension.

In the principles of animal magnetism there was everything to enlist the gentle, and the feeling, on its side ; its ostensible, and indeed

only legitimate object, being to alleviate the ills of humanity by curing diseases which may be beyond the physician's skill. And, as it professes to require virtue, and purity of mind, in its agents, there was nothing revolting to delicacy in its practice : whilst a theory that brought with it, in Gertrude's case, so holy, so delicious a hope as that now awakened within her, was of all others the least likely to be rejected by her ardent and affectionate heart.

" Can it be, oh ! can it be ! " she exclaimed, " that God has heard my prayers, and sent me here for the purpose of making *me*—even me—the instrument of his mercy to my beloved Herbert ! "

She blushed, however, very deeply when De l'Espoir proceeded to explain to her the absolute necessity that she should, in so critical a case, have some one by her side, well skilled in the practice of magnetising, in order to direct her movements, and sustain her nerves in case of any sudden emergency.

“ Then it is indeed at an end !” said she, “ for such a person is not to be found in England ; and in vain should I endeavour to prevail on my father to bring Herbert here, on what he would indeed call a wild-goose chase.”

“ But know you not that Frenchmen can cross the seas as well as Englishmen ?” inquired De l’Espoir, smiling.

“ Yes : but to whom could I turn for such a sacrifice of time and trouble ?” she asked, hastily raising her eyes to his face, but as hastily dropping them when she read his countenance, although her artless lips could scarcely refrain from reflecting the smile she caught on his, and thus betraying the consciousness of his intentions, which only that instant flashed upon her mind. He seized her hand, pressed it between both his, and exclaimed in a voice of unfeigned transport, “ To me—to me, Gertrude, may you turn for it !—I shall follow you to England—I shall assist you in your pious undertaking. You will need con-

stant advice and support ; I shall be at hand to afford it ; and—my only reward shall be—a place in that angelic heart !”

Gertrude started at this finale to his speech ; and, with a burning blush and downcast eyes, asked him in a voice almost inaudible, if he knew not of her engagement ?

Few mistake the symptoms of genuine truth. De l'Espoir felt that he had touched the very verge of the precipice that, in another moment, had engulfed his dearest hopes. He recovered himself at once, and skilfully retreated. “ I do !” he said emphatically. “ I have long known it : else where had been my security ?—I ask but for the lowest place to which a sincere friend may aspire.”

The youthful girl, too early assuming the character of a matron, unsupported and unassisted, again blushed at what she now believed to have been only her own vanity ; and reassured at once both of his propriety and extraordinary kindness, she not only accepted his proposal, but

poured upon him the most enthusiastic expressions of gratitude and delight. De l'Espoir was not yet quite unembarrassed : he saw that Gertrude had not taken into consideration a point upon which all his chance of success must hinge—that of absolute concealment of the whole proceeding from every human being except themselves and the poor invalid, who was of course incapable of betraying them.

The Count was by far too much a man of the world, and knew too much of England, to share in Gertrude's hope of the arguments that prevailed with herself having any effect on her plain, downright, John Bull father ; or even if a parent's despairing anxiety for the recovery of an only son, should induce him to try everything, or anything, that held out a hope of success, still De l'Espoir well knew that neither his own worldly advantages, nor the interest he had been able, with all his pains, to awaken in Gertrude's breast, afforded the smallest chance of his superseding Vandeleur, either

with her family or herself ; and that, therefore, even should the boy recover, he must content himself with abundance of thanks, and expressions of gratitude ; and — should he not, why the matter were still worse. Neither of these alternatives answered his purpose, and nothing remained for him but to follow Gertrude to England privately, but with her own concurrence ; to secrete himself in the neighbourhood of her home ; to bring about clandestine meetings with her ; and, finally, to entangle her so completely in his meshes, that even her family should no longer wish to oppose her marriage with one with whom her character was so deeply compromised.

Nor, in planning thus, did De l'Espoir consider that he was betraying an innocent and lovely being into perpetual misery, through the medium of her best affections. Perhaps, if he had, he might have hesitated, if not desisted altogether. But if the idea ever obtruded itself upon him, he banished it with the idle and

imbecile tirade upon woman's fickleness and want of character ; and while really determining to do all that was " reasonable " to make Gertrude happy as his wife, he persuaded himself that her fidelity to Major Vandeleur, and absolute indifference to admiration from any other man, was like the obedience of the powerful brute creation to the will of man, which proceeds merely from their ignorance of their own capability to resist. Her engagement once forcibly broken,—perhaps, if matters were well managed, by Vandeleur himself,—he flattered himself that her young, gentle, and loving heart would turn its feelings all on him, from the self-same docility and sense of duty.

Alas ! how seldom men can correctly read the secrets of a woman's heart, there to learn how much of all that gentleness and docility which they see, has been born of love itself !

Of De l'Espoir's intended tampering with the unfortunate invalid himself, it is much more difficult to speak. There is but One can search

the human heart through all its secret windings ; and that I am myself at this moment ignorant of how much or how little faith De l'Espoir really placed on the influence of animal magnetism, is perhaps the best defence that can be offered of what ensued from his machinations.

Indeed, his mind was of that satirical, half-light and half-sombre cast, that it was scarcely possible ever to pronounce on what he did or did not believe, and it was very doubtful if he knew himself. He had long rejected all guidance from the lamp of others ; and with too little steadiness, warmth, or desire after truth, to trim his own with diligence, he went groping about in a sort of twilight state of mind, touching and feeling everything, without taking time or pains to assure himself of any, and not unfrequently obscuring the way to others.

In his youth he had certainly not only thought of, but practised, animal magnetism, under the inspirations of his German tutor ; and unless

he had bribed two or three respectable-looking persons, whom he contrived to bring before Gertrude in her walks, he had succeeded in performing some extraordinary cures. Of the failures, it was not his cue to speak ; and for his abandoning a practice so fraught with charity and good-will, he gave as a reason, the prejudices of the world, " which would not be saved ;" and hinted that, for aught Gertrude could tell, he still might practise it in secret.

In secret indeed it must have been ; for, from the first conversation they had held upon the subject, he had made it a request that she should not use his name in speaking of it, as her doing so would expose him, he said, to imbecile ridicule. This of course she neither felt the right nor the inclination to refuse ; and the subject having first been presented to her as one held in derision by almost all, she was not startled to find it was so, by many.

In endeavouring to dive into De l'Espoir's

real feelings on the present occasion, it must be confessed that the thought sometimes did cross him, that if Gertrude's brother were out of the way, or even if his imbecility were to become confirmed, she would be a prize worthy of the aspirations of his country's highest nobles. But Nature holds no monster capable of making the fondly-attached sister the instrument of destroying her brother, through the medium of her very love. No, no ; he persuaded himself that the trial would at least prove a harmless one with respect to him. If indeed he should succeed, why then Gertrude, with the fortune that was already settled upon her, were a prize well worthy of his efforts, even without the influence which he might fairly calculate upon obtaining over her brother's mind ; and if he failed, why he had intended well, and the entire property was entailed upon Gertrude. That the matter would require some careful and adroit management he was well aware ; but such he considered his forte : and against any risk from the indig-

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nation or revenge of her family and lover, he felt he had an invulnerable shield in her own character, so deeply and doubly involved. How far he could be considered justifiable in attempting the trial under such circumstances, I leave to the believers in animal magnetism to determine, who maintain that the most perfect purity of heart and singleness of intention are necessary for the well-being of the patient.

CHAPTER XI.

“ Such were the deep-drawn mysteries,
And some perhaps even more profound,
More ‘wilderer to the mind than these,
Which, far as woman’s thought could sound,
Or a fall’n, outlaw’d spirit reach,
She dared to learn, and I to teach,
Till, fill’d with such unearthly lore,
And mingling the pure light it brings
With much that fancy had before
Shed in false-tinted glimmerings,
The enthusiast girl spoke out.”

THE Count De l’Espoir, though devoid of the warm feelings and affections which are commonly supposed to afford the surest road to the knowledge of our species, through the medium of our sympathies, had yet mingled in too many exciting scenes, not to have acquired enough of that knowledge to enable him to see that the deep involve-

ment of Gertrude's character in its most delicate points, which his scheme required, was precisely what would cause it to be at once rejected by an older, a more experienced, or, alas ! a more prudent person than her with whom he had to deal. Even had her chaperon in Paris been one whose mind and manners gave her more influence over Gertrude, his task had been more difficult ; but while Lady Luscombe, gay and good-humoured, plunged headlong into all the gaieties presented to her, and laughed and chatted with every one, about everything, she left her friend unmolested, and unquestioned, upon the subject of her deeper studies.

In her letters to Vandeleur, Gertrude had described the pleasure she enjoyed in the development of her mind, and the delight with which she looked forward to his finding her improved in companionable qualities, and subjects for conversation, when, as she playfully added, the only one they had tried as yet, should be exhausted. But, as that was not yet the case,

she deferred all discussion of the new subjects that interested her, until then ; and did not for a moment think of giving herself the trouble of writing, or him of reading, the names of her acquaintances, which, she concluded, must be utterly uninteresting to him ; or if by any chance she might have mentioned the Count De l'Espoir, the name would not have been recognised by him. This deprived him of the opportunity of doing more than giving her some general cautions, which she, in her inexperience, did not know how to apply ; and he was himself too much rejoiced at her rational manner of spending her time, and at perceiving that her interest in life was evidently returning, to be very anxious to throw a damp upon her pursuits, especially as every letter of hers breathed undiminished affection and confidence in him. For the propriety and eligibility of her acquaintances he trusted alike to her own purity of mind, and to Lord Luscombe's position in society.

In fact, the latter did, once or twice, remark

to his lady the constant attendance of the Count De l'Espoir upon their young *protégée*, and she laughingly repeated it to Gertrude: but the unfeigned amazement, the heartfelt contempt with which the latter treated the very idea of his rivalling Vandeleur in her affections, together with her open and undisguised avowal of the only link or point of attraction that existed between De l'Espoir and her, perfectly convinced her friend that she was as indifferent to the count as Vandeleur himself could desire.

“ Still,” Gertrude said, “ still, Augusta, although nothing could be more impossible than that my feelings could be, in the very remotest degree, influenced by his civilities, if there is anything the least remarkable in them, I would not receive them an hour longer.”

But Lady Luscombe assured her that on that head she need not have an apprehension, as, even were she to change her mind, the world had no right to censure; but, upon any other supposition, it would be childish and unmeaning

to deprive herself of the pleasure and improvement she professed to derive from his society ; and Lady Luscombe, for her own part, was delighted that Gertrude had found a companion who seemed to render her visit so agreeable to her.

Probably, had De l'Espoir been a more loving, or more loveable being, women would not have felt this perfect safety in his company, both for themselves and others.

Lady Luscombe and Gertrude continued to be sincerely attached friends ; but they moved now in different worlds—one in that of reality, the other in that of imagination—and they latterly had scarcely an idea in common. It was with little difficulty, therefore, that De l'Espoir prevailed upon Gertrude to promise not to subject either his name, or even this his favourite theory, to the gay badinage of her lively friend. She had, in fact, herself felt no inducement to confide the secret to her ; but when, encouraged by her ready acquiescence in this request, he

proceeded to extend the prohibition to those nearest and dearest to her, not all the maxims of worldly prudence, and suspicions of the perfidy of man, that ever were preached into the ears of youthful woman, could have brought a more vivid blush to the cheek, or a more revolting sensation to the heart, than did woman's innate feelings of propriety and love's ingenuous suggestions to the cheek and heart of Gertrude.

“It was impossible,” she said, “absolutely impossible, to keep so important a step a secret from her father;” and she blushed to explain the injury she felt she should be doing to Vandeleur's confiding affection, in thus linking herself in such close intimacy with another man, to his exclusion.

De l'Espoir felt his airy castles tottering a second time; but, too good a tactician to combat her feelings in their first force, he contented himself with bowing in seeming acquiescence, and expressed his regret that all was indeed then at an end. In his own mind, however, he

rejoiced to find that her scruples lay in her own natural and affectionate feelings, rather than in the cold, acquired cautions of the world's wisdom, and prescribed rules of propriety; for he judged that it would be much more easy to overcome the former, in one so artless and so disinterested, and for so hallowed a purpose. He judged but too truly.

“Why at an end?” she asked.

“In the first place, mademoiselle, suffer me to ask, have you any reason to hope that you could prevail on your father to allow what he considers quackery and nonsense, if not something worse, to be practised on his son in the state in which you describe him to be?”

“I must hope he could be prevailed on to hear the arguments in its favour;—at least,” she said hesitating, as the doubt of what she ventured to hope, came strongly over her, — “at least, I am sure Major Vandeleur would.”

The reader will be at no loss to guess that the Count De l'Espoir did not relish *his* being

brought into the conclave: indeed, he thought it not a little strange that they two should come again in collision, as it were, by Gertrude as a connecting link; and perhaps in his light—dark, sarcastic mind, the pleasure of revenge, though not strong enough to have instigated him of itself to any serious undertaking, gave not a little zest to his present plan. Be this as it may, he now asked Gertrude if she had kept her promise of never mentioning his name.

“As connected with animal magnetism?” she said. “No, never; nor, indeed, I think, to Major Vandeleur at all.”

“Well, allow me to enforce on your recollection your promise not to do so; and, indeed, since you have become so much interested on the subject, do not, pray, mention my name on any subject in your letters to him, lest he might connect the circumstance with it: and on this point I confess myself particularly sensitive of ridicule,—indeed, to an extent that might pre-

vent my attempting any further services to my fellow-creatures."

" But is that right ?"

" Perhaps not ; *et puis ?*"

" Oh, certainly—I perfectly understand you. I have no right to stop as much good as you are disposed to do, because you choose not to do all. Then I am to understand that you would not come over openly, even if my father could be prevailed upon to give his consent ?"

" My dear Miss Evelyn, when I first made you the offer, I confess that the idea of exposing myself to public ridicule did not occur to me ; and of course, then, that was not taken into contemplation : yet I do not hesitate to say, that were there no other possible means to effect this most interesting cure, I should sacrifice everything to try it."

" But if you are so sure of succeeding, what ridicule could attach to it ?"

" I am not sure of succeeding : I am only

sure of this, that as far as either my judgment or experience can go, it seems a case particularly calculated for the influence of the *will*, and the diffusion of the *magnetic fluid* to be exerted with the most beneficial results. I should therefore feel it sinful not to try it at any sacrifice of mere conventional rules."

"Yes; but it is the conventional rules I wish you *not* to break through."

"True," said De l'Espoir, affecting to correct himself for this mistake, which he had purposely committed to show Gertrude her own case; "True; I should have said, of any worldly or selfish feelings; but the simple fact is, that this very publicity would in all probability defeat the object altogether; and that is really my standing objection."

He then proceeded to inform her, that the most perfect unity of mind, and faith, and will, are necessary in those deeply interested in a case of magnetising: that too great anxiety, the slightest doubt, or even any wandering

thoughts of any single person present during the time of operation, may be most injurious to the patient ; and, in short, that his conscience would not permit him to make the trial where people were concerned so likely to disturb its course as her friends, whose minds could not possibly be brought into the necessary state.

“ No, mademoiselle,” he added, playfully taking her hand ; “ if you will yourself sacrifice nothing, the sacrifice of my feelings alone will not do, else believe me it should be made.”

“ Oh ! God knows how readily I should sacrifice my life could it restore my dearest Herbert to what he was !” she exclaimed. “ But there is something in this undertaking so awful—so mysterious: and besides,” she said, with the most natural and most salutary feeling that a woman can encourage—“ and besides, I do not think that anything can be right in itself, that calls for concealment from our nearest and dearest friends, those most interested in our welfare.”

"That is, supposing the world to be in a state of perfection," observed the count.

"No: how?"

"Because, if not, there must ever be erroneous judgments and opinions upon every subject; and the only way the wise and good can correct them, is by acting by the rest who are not so, as parents do by children; that is, by concealing the salutary medicine, that they may be forced to profit by it."

"But I—I, so young a girl, surely am not the one who should take upon myself to set established rules at defiance upon my own superior judgment?"

De l'Espoir smiled meaningly, and looked down with a look that would have become a blush, had one been at his beck. After a moment's pause, he said, "No, perhaps not; but pardon me if I say, that you would not be acting altogether on your own judgment."

"Oh! I perceive," exclaimed Gertrude, her playful spirit irresistibly caught by the modestly

ridiculous dilemma into which the count had betrayed himself,—“ I perceive, *you*, Monsieur le Comte, are the wise and good ; *my* friends and family are the silly children ; and *I* am (or ought to be) your most obedient humble servant.”

“ At least, you are ever charming,” he exclaimed hastily ; “ and if you cannot convince my judgment against my life’s experience, you can at least win or command my silence. So let us drop the subject for ever, after one little word more in self-defence. I do not set myself up in opposition to your family ; I have not the happiness of knowing them : I only proposed a temporary concealment from them of a medicine, I may call it, which you own they are prejudiced against, until the accomplishment of an object dear alike to them and you ; at which time you were not only at liberty to reveal the whole, but poor *I*, should even look forward to your doing so, as the only means of my being permitted to continue an acquaintance

become so valuable to me. You are as well aware as I am, that their prejudices, were there no other objections to the premature disclosure, would totally defeat our plans."

"It is too true," said poor Gertrude, in a cruel state of perplexity. "And beloved Herbert! But am I quite sure that their objections to, or contempt of, this theory are not well founded? May it not be I who am mistaken?"

"It is not for me, who profess the theory, to decide that question," answered De l'Espoir, with a quiet dignity which spoke much at least for his own belief in it; "and if you think that they have impartially studied the subject, and are, on conviction, satisfied of its absurdity, perhaps you would be wrong in preferring your own judgment, or mine, before theirs. But if, on the contrary, you believe that they have merely heard of it, if at all, as one of the wild visions of a detested, because long a rival nation, and have never seen a trial, or listened to an argu-

ment in its favour, will you inform me what science might not be rejected on the same grounds? Remember that Galileo was persecuted and imprisoned by the most enlightened nation then in existence, for broaching the doctrine of the sun not moving round the earth."

Gertrude sighed deeply; she felt unable to refute the casuistry of the count, and her whole soul was bent upon making the experiment on her brother: while the selfish point of view in which De l'Espoir artfully placed her scruples, was not without its effect on her generous nature.

After a minute's silence, which De l'Espoir was careful not to interrupt, she said, "But could I not go through the rules myself? they appear to be extremely simple."


"For your soul's sake, attempt it not!" he exclaimed with either real or well-feigned solicitude. "The very anxiety that would rest upon your mind, after what I have said, would defeat your object. You say your brother is

much debilitated : better let him linger on even in that pitiable state, than bring on a paroxysm from which the slightest terror, or indecision, would incapacitate you from restoring him, and perhaps either loss of life, or the final overthrow of his reason, be the consequence."

"Oh, better indeed !" exclaimed Gertrude, turning very pale ; "and if such consequence could ensue, the undertaking in any way appears to me a desperate, almost an impious one."

"It need not, under skilful directions, and, above all, with steady collected nerves. The surgeon might as well shrink from the saving operation, as you from relieving your suffering brother : much more so indeed ; for the one, in any event, subjects the patient to excruciating pain,—the other is either imperceptible, or delightful in its effects."

"Ah ! but," observed Gertrude, "the surgeon has the experience of mankind, and, still more, the evidence of his senses and reason to



guide him ; whilst the professors of animal magnetism have nothing but the assertion of unaccountable effects, founded upon the authority of a few, and, in general, obscure individuals, in opposition to the reason of the many, and the enlightened, and which even they themselves who most believe in it, do not pretend to account for."

"When they can account for the thoughts, which they maintain to be immaterial, producing visible and palpable effects upon substantial matter—when they can account for a movement, or a look of their own, producing an effect upon another person, which may perhaps occasion a change in that person's destiny, not only through time but through eternity—then will I undertake to explain to them how far the whole concentrated power of the mind, with contact of the person, (for I go not the lengths some do, in saying the idle can operate at a distance), brought to bear upon one object,—as the health of a friend, —may operate to that person's benefit or preju-

dice. I know they tell us, that, the *will* being *no body*, and denying, as they do, the existence of any such fluid as that we call *animal magnetic fluid*, or at least our power of dispensing it, it is impossible the will, or mind of one person, can affect the body of another. Why then is not the question, as to whether or not light is a body, at once set at rest for ever?—for, surely, no one will deny the effect which light produces on the body of the eye—on the materials of vegetables? But, what may appear more simple still, or what may at least seem to bear more completely on the subject, is *infection*. What is infection? Is it a body?—is it a fluid?—and how is it communicated from one person to another? When they can prove these phenomena to be better understood than what we profess by animal magnetism, then will I no longer be its votary. In fact, were I to attempt a solution of my own concerning it,—or rather, were I to attempt to account for its being so much more

uncommon in its effects than infection, I should say it was because human nature is so much more willing to part with (I will not say *to impart*) disease than with health ; and though there may be many instances in which health would willingly be divided, to save or serve a beloved object, yet our nature, our corporeal nature, ever at war with our spiritual, is averse to the effort, and acts, like most of our vital functions, almost unconsciously to us, preventing our very knowledge of the power that is within us. Were it not for this wise tenacity of nature in preserving what is essential to its own well-being, I have not a doubt but that good health would be as *infectious* as disease. But few are *capable* of the *will* to dispense it, or, in other words, to become *magnetisers*."

" Then the exertion of magnetising is injurious to those who practise it?" observed Gertrude.

" In most cases it is slightly so ; at least, if pursued too long or too frequently : but Nature

has supplied means for repairing the injury. You already know my theory, of a certain portion of everything being in the world always, unchangeably, without increase or diminution ; and that it is according as they are well or ill apportioned out, we have good or evil, health or sickness. When, therefore, a person in health of mind and body has, in order to minister to the sufferings of another, given out a portion of his own existence, ‘ there are a thousand inanimate objects at hand to return it to him—a walk in the sunshine, the exhalation of flowers or trees,’* and various other remedies as simple. At the same time, caution and moderation must be observed in this as in the use of every other gift.”

He need not have been so anxious to satisfy his present auditor that the effects on the magnetiser were not serious or permanent. The information, that the operation called perhaps for some slight sacrifice of her own

* See the various works on Animal Magnetism.

health, was so far from cooling poor Gertrude's desire of exercising it for her brother's relief, that it seemed rather to give double weight to the count's arguments, by investing her, as it were, with an individual *right* in the matter, by dispensing her own health for him : and besides, she was yet young, and ardent enough to think that the more difficult any task, the more pleasure she should have in performing it. She became more anxious than ever to make the experiment ; yet, with the oppressive feeling that the first mystery or concealment must ever bring to an ingenuous mind, she left the count with a heavy sigh, and a promise to give the matter her best consideration.

Alas ! she was but little aware how incapable she was of giving it the consideration it required, or placing it in those various lights which the many eyes of the world would reflect upon it. In the privacy of her own apartment, indeed, where she was accustomed to be, as it were, surrounded in imagination by her family

and her lover, their opinions, their feelings, and their very prejudices resumed their sway. But when again she thought of Herbert languishing out, perhaps a long life in hopeless idiocy, or at least in listless non-enjoyment; and that all which she could bring forward to console herself for so dreadful a doom to one so dear, was the reflection that she had run no risk of injuring her own character in the eyes of the world; she turned with absolute loathing from so cold, so selfish a consideration, and would, perhaps, have cast it to the winds for ever, had not the image of Vandeleur given it a weight it possessed not before. His sorrow, his disappointment, his anguish, at learning that she was capable of such imprudence, and such want of confidence in him, was not to be endured; and then, young as she was, she was fully aware how differently the matter would be viewed by the most candid, according to its failure or success. Should it succeed, she could at least appeal to their own senses for

the strength of the arguments that had prevailed with her, and displeasure at the risk she had run would be lost in the joy which it produced. But should it fail, and leave them only as they were before, she must for ever either bear the heavy burden of a secret from her husband, or submit to his thinking she had suffered herself to be unpardonably duped into a very improper step.

As her native good sense, when left to its own pure light, presented the matter to her in this point of view, she came to the determination of writing to Vandeleur upon the subject of animal magnetism; repeating some of the strongest arguments in its favour; quoting some of the certificates she had seen; and without betraying De l'Espoir, which she felt bound in every way not to do, or her own project, lest by a premature and positive prohibition he should deprive her of the very power of prosecuting it, draw out his opinion of the arguments, and so be enabled, at least,

to form some idea as to what probability there was of his ever being brought to tolerate, or even to forgive, the experiment.

As soon as this letter was despatched, Gertrude felt her mind a little more at ease than it had been for some days past ; and, indeed, would probably have been more so than it had been for months, now that her sanguine nature made her hope that she had put this most important matter into the surest and safest train, had not a most unexpected monitress sprung up to annoy her, in the person of Mrs. Sally Whitecross, now become entirely her own attendant. This young woman, whose debt of gratitude to Vandeleur, the longer she lived she became the more sensible of, now took it into her head to evince it by watching over Gertrude in his absence, as a nurse might be supposed to watch over a lovely infant committed to her charge. It was not long before she heard Lord Luscombe's foreign servants laughing, and commenting upon the constant attendance of the Count

De l'Espoir upon her young lady. The name, of course, conveyed no idea to Sally of her *ci-devant* admirer; but still she thought it very hard that her idol, Major Vandeleur, should run the risk of losing his lady-love, for any Frenchman of them all: for neither the feelings of an English soldier's wife during the Peninsular war, nor anything she had therein seen of that nation, had tended to correct in Sally's mind the illiberal prejudice to which so many better informed persons have yielded—that of judging a nation by an individual, or by accidental circumstances. She only waited to hear that the attentions were continued; when she determined, at whatever risk to herself, to try the effect of a little timely remonstrance.

Accordingly, one evening, as she finished Gertrude's toilette, and handed her gloves and fan, she fetched forth a sharp sigh, and said, "Well, I know what I wish."

"What do you wish, Whitecross?" said

Gertrude carelessly, as she stooped once more to the glass to arrange a stray ringlet.

“ I wish Major Vandeleur were here to dance with you to-night.”

“ Why? do I look so particularly well ?” asked Gertrude, with a slight smile, and a slighter sigh.

“ Oh ! you do, ma’am, to be sure,” answered the lady’s maid ; “ you always do that ; but it was not just that I meant.”

“ What then ?” said Gertrude, as she fixed her bouquet more firmly together.

“ Oh ! maybe I have my reasons.”

Gertrude looked round in astonishment :

“ What in the world do you mean ?”

“ Why, then, ma’am, if I must speak,”—and she affected to settle a pin in the back of Gertrude’s dress, in order to conceal a slight trepidation at the liberty which she felt she was taking ;—“ then, Miss Evelyn, if I must speak, it is just this—that I don’t like to hear so much of that count’s dancing such constant attendance on you.”

“ Oh ! is that all, Sally ? Are you afraid for your favourite ? Well, I assure you there is not the least danger ; so you may make your mind perfectly easy ; besides, I have not danced since I came here.” And she ran down stairs, not herself too well satisfied that these remarks should have been made.

But Sally could not make her mind perfectly easy. She flattered herself she knew too much of the world for that, and especially of Frenchmen. She recollected how irresistible one of them had once appeared to her ; and had she not good reason then to conclude they must be so to all women ? Indeed, amidst all the contempt, horror, and detestation which in those days it was almost a duty to express and feel towards them, not the least cause was their ascendancy over the fair sex ; and we should scarcely like to affirm, that to this may not be attributed the derogatory opinion that Englishmen so long entertained of a lady's taste. Be

that as it may, Mrs. Sally Whitecross, it appears, had no great dependance on that of Gertrude ; and accordingly, to relieve her mind, she sat down and wrote a letter upon the subject to Major Vandeleur, taking care to direct it as she had seen Gertrude direct hers, not even forgetting the final *e* in *Irelande*, and carried it to the post-office herself.

Nor in acting thus did Sally prove herself to be more meddling than the generality of her sex. In fact, she was not so, though what is called an active and bustling young woman ; and in all probability, had it not been for the precise nature of the service which Vandeleur had rendered her, such an idea never would have occurred to her. But, as it was, she felt that she had an opportunity of repaying him in kind, and of course eagerly seized upon it ; — not, however, in the form of a complaint of Gertrude ; for, not only was she already too much won upon, by her engaging gentleness and sweetness for that, but she was pleased to make

the cases more exactly similar, by representing Gertrude as artless and unsuspecting, and cautioning him against the allurements of the Frenchman. She little knew how much more similar still she might have represented them ; but she was destined soon to be enlightened.

“ Miss Evelyn,” said the count, a day or two after Mrs. Whitecross had despatched her letter, as Gertrude and he strolled on a little before the rest of their party, “ I have at this moment an opportunity of showing you such a specimen of the power of animal magnetism, as I think could not fail to convince any one, except those who are pronounced to have ‘ eyes and see not,’ ‘ ears and hear not.’ I have a person thrown into the state of somnambulism by my own power as a magnetiser ; and if you will bring any sick person to him, he will, by the force of sympathy and forgetfulness of self,—that is, by having the selfish energies so relaxed, by the magnetic fluid, as to lose their own tenacity and unite with others,—he will in this state

not only inform your patient what her or his ailment may be, but will prescribe the proper remedies to cure it."

"That indeed would be a curious sight," exclaimed Gertrude, "and I should like extremely to see it. I may choose some sick person of whom you have never even heard?"

"Nay, it must be so; else where would be the *proof*? and I am anxious that nothing should be taken upon trust from me."

It may be supposed that Gertrude readily grasped at this offered testimony, not so much for her own further satisfaction, as to have it to bring forward to convince her friends. However, when she came to consider of it at leisure, she soon perceived the utter impracticability of her contriving, in Paris, to have an invalid conveyed from one place to another, to undergo so curious an examination, without drawing down such publicity, and conjecture, as she should shrink from herself, even setting aside all consideration for the count.

In this dilemma, she could only think of having recourse to her maid, and deputing her at once to procure the invalid, and be witness to the scene. It was to take place in the house where the *somnambule* (himself a convalescent patient) resided; he was of course a poor man, living in a poor and remote street; but Sally, from having travelled over a good deal of Europe as a soldier's wife, and as maid to those of the officers, was more suited to the office than many Englishwomen would have been.

To this plan she was obliged to procure the count's concurrence; but as she represented the young woman as one entirely in her interests, and on whom she could implicitly rely, he made but few objections; the more so as he foresaw himself, though he did not admit it as yet to her, that some one confidant would be absolutely necessary in England to the carrying on his scheme, and he did not regret having an opportunity of paying his court to her beforehand.

With Sally herself the task was still less diffi-

cult ; for she had such a reliance upon her own knowledge of human nature, and especially of mankind, founded on her early escape and subsequent campaigns, as served to convince herself, at least, that she should see through the count's intentions at a glance. Besides, she was really kind-hearted ; and when Gertrude confided to her, with that air of truth which is, after all, scarcely ever mistaken, though others may be mistaken for it, that the only thought of her soul was to learn from him how to perform a cure upon her brother, the woman herself became interested in the case, and now felt a severe twinge at heart, when she recollected the letter she had written to Vandeleur ; this, however, she quieted with the reflection of how speedily another might overtake it : and, “ after all, she had, she blessed her stars, said nothing against her young lady ; ” whom, however, she now felt double zeal to serve, from some little lurking dissatisfaction with herself.

CHAPTER XII.

Ye shall have miracles—ay, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything—but true.

The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan.

IN order still more fully to prevent all suspicion and conjecture, it was settled that Mrs. Whitecross was to proceed at once to the house of the *somnambule*, where the sick person, whom she found no difficulty in bribing with a few francs, was to meet her at the hour appointed. De l'Espoir promised to be there beforehand; and had he even known that the appointment was with his former love, and had his feelings continued in their first force towards her, he could not have awaited the interview with more punctuality, and anxiety for the final result.

The moment Mrs. Whitecross sent up Gertrude's note, mentioning that the bearer was the person to be trusted, De l'Espoir desired that she should be shown into an apartment, where he purposely waited, in order to find out, in a few minutes' *tête-à-tête* conversation, what sort of person he had to deal with. And perhaps never before did two persons meet, so anxiously determined critically to examine into the character of the other, without a suspicion of how intimately they were once acquainted !

The moment Sally was shown in, and the door closed upon her, the count spoke : " You are Miss Evelyn's maid ? " he said.

He had scarcely uttered the words when something in the voice, the foreign accent, and yet the good pronunciation of English, struck upon her ear ; and hastily flinging back her thick, black, English lace veil, she saw standing before her, in all the pride of masculine beauty, the first man who had ever whispered love into her ear or instilled it into her heart. For a moment she

stood overcome with the natural feeling of surprise, and flashing recollections; but instantly recovering herself, she began to consider the proper, and the becoming, and uttered two or three shrieks so fast after each other, that the count had not time to stop her,—if indeed his amazement would have permitted him to make the attempt. For, to what a pitch it was excited, may be imagined, when the reader is informed that Mrs. Whitecross had all the advantage of the recognition on her side. Time had not indeed dealt particularly severely with Mrs. Whitecross; but still, the mother of six children, and one who had been exposed to much vicissitudes of burning suns, and piercing winters, was not without some memorials of his flight; and the plump, and fashionably-dressed Parisian abigail, bore, at first view, but little resemblance to the fair, delicate, and sylph-like little English peasant girl of fifteen years of age.

In fact, poor old Time is condemned to bear the blame of many a theft not his; but the

day is not far distant, when *circumstance* will be made to take its share, from which it has been so long exempt.

Some will think, that as soon as Mrs. Whitecross perceived, by the unfeigned amazement of the count, and his respectful and distant inquiries as to the cause of her alarm, that he really had not the very slightest idea of what it could be, her wisest plan would have been to have drawn down her Manchester veil again, preserved the incognita, and done all that her mistress required of her, and no more. But Sally knew too much of human nature to think that would be natural in her situation ; (a knowledge, by the bye, that is often "more honoured in the breach than in the observance"—a knowledge only desirable when teaching us what to shun, seldom what to excuse,) and a feeling at that moment sprang up in her breast which I am at a loss how to designate : for, vanity one would think it could scarcely be, that made her at once angry at finding how much she was

altered, and yet anxious to prove to him that it actually was the beautiful Sally who was so altered. I think Locke ought to have taken this female feeling into consideration when discussing personal identity.

On De l'Espoir's approaching her once more, and begging to be informed what had alarmed her, she raised her eyes to him with a reproachful glance, and continued them in that position for some time. The eyes were certainly very bright and beautiful eyes, but there was nothing in the expression that he could either account for or recall.

"So you don't recollect me?" she said at last.

"Recollect you?" he stammered forth, shocked that he could be subjected to the accusation from so fine a woman as Sally certainly still was; and, strange to say, something in her voice, though of course altered also, struck upon his ear.

"Yes, recollect me. But I suppose the Count

De l'Espoir and Monsieur De Brons are people as different as, it would seem, Sally Henshawe and Mrs. Whitecross are?"

"*Bon Dieu !* Sally Henshawe?" exclaimed the count in unfeigned amazement, springing towards her. But Sally, who was not only an indignant, but really a virtuous woman, according to her own views of human nature, and sincerely attached to her worthy husband, drew back with becoming dignity. And, perhaps, if the truth was known, the desire of showing the count how virtuous she could now be, might have partly led her to discover herself.

The count who, after all, knew human nature fully as well, if not a million times better, than she did, instantly recovered himself. "Is it possible?" he exclaimed: "You are indeed altered! Never could I have supposed that the sweet, pretty, but childish little rustic, could have grown into the lovely woman now before me." And he bowed as he might have done to her mistress.

Sally's indignation subsided; she even felt joy in hearing that her beauty was only altered to be improved, and wondered at her own stupidity in doubting it. But it was an honest joy, and only flashed across her for a moment, as she thought upon her fond husband. To the count, she bowed to his bow, and said, that "she was handsome enough in the eyes of them she wanted to be handsome for."

"Then your husband still lives, Mrs. — ah—ah?"

"He does, thank God! and I hope you have forgotten his name too?"

"His name,—oh, dear no!—hem! But, somehow, I like better to call you Sally."

"But I like better to be called Mrs. Whitecross; so you will keep your distance if you please, and now inform me what you are dangle after my young lady for? Do you want Mr. Vandeleur to come across you again?"

"By Heaven, if he does!" exclaimed De l'Espoir, his dark eyes emitting sparks of fury

as the sight of Sally brought his early rival or antagonist before him ; but he forbore to utter his threats.

“ Why, then, I can tell you, he shall and will,” said Sally, “ if you don’t give over your attempts: there are them who will warn him, for one good turn deserves another.”

“ What attempts, Sally ? Is it possible that silly child has not told you the object of my attentions ?”

“ Who is the silly child ?”

“ Why, Miss Evelyn. I vow to you, Mrs. Whitecross, in the most solemn manner, and by everything sacred, that I never uttered a word to the girl in the way of love or even flirtation : in fact, she is a child compared to me. No ! though I would say nothing to offend you now, in mere self-defence, and to disabuse you of a dangerous error, I may confess that my first love was my last.”

Sally thought it proper not to seem to understand this.

“ Why, certainly, she is little more than a child,” she said ; “ and therefore it is that I would take care of her.”

“ You are right, quite right, Sally ; and I refer you to herself for the truth of what I have said. No ; I have done with love : my business now is to endeavour to instruct Miss Evelyn in an art that I think might restore her unfortunate brother to his senses.”

At this moment a person entered to say that the invalid was arrived. “ Well, let them wait,” said De l’Espoir, with a careless impatience that did not speak much for his reverence for his art, or at least for his instruments ; but instantly recollecting that there must be no appearance of collusion between the *somnambule* and the sick person selected for the experiment, he desired the latter to be shown into the apartment occupied by himself and Sally, and motioned to him to take a seat ; rightly judging that the poor invalid, who was a cripple with only one leg, would take but little

interest in the English dialogue carrying on at the farther end of a large and gloomy apartment. Accordingly, as soon as the door was closed again, he continued: "Sally, tell me if you believe me free from all love, or selfish views, towards Miss Evelyn or any other woman?"

"Towards Miss Evelyn, I do, sir, from what she has told me herself; but for other women, I neither know nor care."

"I do not hope you do, Sally; and yet, if I told you that I had been planning a visit to England since I came to my fortune and title, for the purpose of inquiring if your husband still lived, or if there was any chance for me, perhaps you would think with more kindness on one you once certainly loved, Sally."

"Ay, and one who would have taken a pretty advantage of that love."

"For that, Sally, you have seen too much of the world, not to know that at that time young men of my country had every disadvantage of

education, and everything else, to struggle against, and that there was a wildness of principle over the world—over the Continent at least—just then, that led astray older heads than yours or mine. And who can say, after all, Sally, that we might not have been happier than we are?”

“Are you beginning again?” exclaimed Sally. “Speak for yourself; I am happy enough.”

“Heaven keep you so, Sally! But don’t stand in the way of all that remains for me, that of doing good to my fellow-creatures. Do not prejudice Miss Evelyn against me by mentioning our early folly,—if such must now be called what we once both called by another name, Sally, in our evening strolls by the hawthorn-lane. But never mind; let me serve this poor youth if I can, and then forget me.”

Sally wiped her eyes, and promised not to be the means of stopping him from anything that was right.

“ Then come up now, and see how much I can do.”

They went up stairs accordingly to a room in which stood a bed with the curtains drawn; and in it De l'Espoir informed Sally that his *somnambule* lay, in that mysterious sleep into which he had thrown him, by the force of the magnetic fluid which he had imparted to him.

“ You may go over and look at him,” said he.

“ Is there no fear of wakening him ?”

“ Not the least; he cannot wake while I will him to sleep.”

She approached the bed, and saw a man apparently in deep slumber.

The invalid was then brought in. It was clear that he and De l'Espoir had never met before; and equally clear that there had no intelligence passed between the latter, and the sleeper since the arrival of the sick man. On his entrance now into the chamber, De l'Espoir led him over to the bed; and before he uttered a word, the sleeper was heard to turn and moan as if he felt some uneasiness.

"He is now experiencing the influence of the sick man's presence," whispered the count to Mrs. Whitecross.

She became terrified, and fancied that she herself felt something *queer*.

"Sit down, but don't be alarmed at whatever you may see," said the count; and gently extricating one of the sleeper's hands from the bed-coverings, he brought it in contact with that of the invalid. The sleeper took the hand and held it for a few minutes. De l'Espoir spoke. He informed the sleeper that the person whose hand he held desired some information respecting his state of health. There was no answer for a moment; but then the sleeper, without moving, or having once opened his eyes, or even pushed back the curtains, pronounced these words, in a decided tone of conviction: "The man whose hand I hold is sick: he has been treated for a disease of the stomach, and stimulating medicines given him, which have augmented the disease, the seat of which is in

the liver, and not in the stomach ; let him go home, avoid the hot and intoxicating liquors he has hitherto indulged in to keep down the uneasy sensations that succeeded to the amputation of his leg—let him have recourse to medicines of an opposite tendency, and he will recover.”

De l'Espoir, who had hitherto kept his eyes fixed on the sleeper, was now startled from his contemplation by a piercing shriek from Mrs. Whitecross, whose superstitious terrors at this extraordinary manifestation of *clairvoyance* totally overcame her, and, before De l'Espoir had time to re-assure her, she actually fainted.* De l'Espoir caused her to be immediately carried out of the room, and directed the proper restoratives to be applied. When these had succeeded, and she opened her eyes, she found

* Without pledging ourselves for the accuracy of the particulars of this case, we need only refer our readers to the reports of the commissioners who examined into the subject of animal magnetism in Paris in 1826, for the authenticity of facts as curious.

herself in the same apartment into which she had first been shown, with nobody but the count there besides.

“ Well, Sally,” said he smiling, “ what do you think of my powers now ?” She confessed herself overwhelmed. “ Well, you will give a good account of me to your young lady ? eh ? —and you will say nothing to stand between me and her further instruction for her brother’s recovery. And, Sally, let me hope I may see you again ?”

Sally made some dignified reply about having no objection to see him as a friend ; and, upon the whole, not ill pleased with her morning’s adventure,—proud of all she had to tell, and of all she must not tell, though redounding so highly to her own honour,—she could not resist calling on her way home at the house whence she had procured the invalid. Here, as they were already necessarily in so much of the secret, she could not conceive it any harm to let them know that it was no low vulgar magnetiser they

had to deal with, but no less a person than the Count de l'Espoir.

The woman of the house, mother to the poor cripple, changed colour at the name, and hesitated not to load him with a parent's curses. He had not long before robbed her of her only daughter, and that when her son was fighting the battles of his country, in one of which he had lost that leg, to which the *somnambule* alluded.

Sally, as may be supposed, both felt and expressed a proper degree of horror at this intelligence; upon which the woman, a decent and respectable person in her sphere, proceeded to unfold to Sally such a character of him, supported by facts and witnesses to which she referred her, as caused Sally to think she had indeed had, a second time, a merciful escape that he did not carry her off wholesale to the infernal regions.

The truth of the magnetic power, however, she could not deny; and, indeed, nothing in the

poor woman's account tended to invalidate it ; on the contrary, everything corroborated his head to be as good, as his heart was bad. Sally came therefore to the determination that she would tell the truth to Miss Evelyn on that point ; but would take care to warn her against his general character, and even to repeat these words of the poor woman's, " If there be a young lady in the case," (as, in spite of all cautions, Sally had dropped some hints,) " tell her to take a mother's word for it, that she has no chance of safety but in avoidance."

Unfortunately they were the words, of all others, the least calculated to touch the pre-occupied heart of the guileless and pure-minded Gertrude. Had she spoken of prudence, propriety, conventional rules, or the duty of confidence in her family, it might, and probably would, from any one, have had due effect ; but the idea of danger, which to her only appeared in the one form of entangling her affections, she treated with the contempt it deserved.

However, the scene which awaited Sally on her return, was one which did not leave her either time or inclination to enforce her lessons, even with the eloquence she might otherwise have employed. And, above all things, whatever flickerings might have crossed her mind about confiding to Gertrude her own knowledge of the count, now completely vanished ; as she determined that such unpleasant confidence was no longer necessary.

On her return to Lord Luscombe's hotel, she found it in a complete uproar : men shouting, and running to and fro ; women chattering, and running in their way ; and, in short, preparations making for a hasty return to England, with all due confusion. Notwithstanding all Sally's travelling, her "mother-tongue" was still that which, in any sudden emergency at least, came most home to her ear. She fled, therefore, as quickly as was possible, from the jabbering of the foreign domestics, to her young lady's apartment, to learn what this

sudden fuss could mean. She found her apparently acting under the same influence as those she had flown from ; pulling her dresses out of their receptacles, and, in the hurried restlessness of irrepressible anxiety, attempting to pack them for travelling, with as much haste as if the entire expedition was only retarded by waiting for her wardrobe ! Sally, now in serious alarm, inquired what had happened ? “ Oh, rather tell me, Sally,” said Gertrude, flying to her and seizing her by the arm, “ oh, rather tell me what has happened ! Do I live or die ? Are there any hopes for me ? ” And she gasped for breath from her own vehemence.

Sally was terrified, and really feared her intellects were disturbed. “ For God’s sake, ma’am, what is the matter ? ” she now whimpered out in tears.

“ My brother—my brother, Sally ! he is—he is very ill ; and poor Mr. Mason is—no more, and he is left all alone. My father has hinted it to me ; but Lady Luscombe’s letters speak more

plainly. We are to leave Paris this evening. Now, tell me what you have seen ; have I any chance of saving him ?”

“ It was not in human nature, at least not in Sally Whitecross’s knowledge of it, not to bestow all the comfort in her power at such a crisis as this. She gave, therefore, a full, true, and clear account of the wonderful scene she had witnessed, as far as the effect of animal magnetism was concerned, and did not hesitate to give it all the colouring of her own startled imagination : and was then, as in duty bound, beginning with, “ Still I don’t much like—” but Gertrude stopped her, by clasping her hands and exclaiming, “ Then the die is cast !” And in that moment of wild excitement and agitation, she flew over to her writing-table, and scribbled these words to *De l’Espoir* :

“ I have terrible accounts from England. I accept your generous offer. Come after us, and let me do all I can to repair my absence from my beloved brother at such a time. I

cannot delay sending this, long enough to think whether or not I ought to confide to my maid your intended visit to England ; so that point I leave to your own discretion and discernment. I enclose a bank-note, which will defray your expenses, and which it will offend and shock me if you refuse, as I shall be under sufficient obligations to you without adding pecuniary ones."

Having, with trembling hands, folded and sealed this note, she delivered it to Sally, and told her she must repair instantly with it to the hotel of the count. Sally's conscience twitched her, and she began again about her dislike of the count ; but Gertrude, who very naturally thought she herself had as good an opportunity of judging of him as Sally, who had only then seen him for the first time, as she supposed, impatiently stopped her, asking if that was a reason why she was not to avail herself of his knowledge or skill to save her brother, and that she wanted nothing more of him.

“Take care of that, ma’am,” said Sally, and repeated the old woman’s words.

“I thought,” said Gertrude, “I desired you most particularly not to mention the count’s name to any one?”

Sally was frightened, and tried to make some excuse. Gertrude interrupted her.

“I am very much displeased at your disobeying my orders. You have shown me that you are not to be trusted. Happily it does not signify now, as we are leaving Paris so immediately; but of this be assured, that I consider myself a better judge of my own conduct and feelings than either you or your new friend can be.”

Sally was too much alarmed at having displeased her young lady to make further remonstrance, and concluding that the note was in all probability to bid him farewell, especially as she espied a bank-note enclosed in it—which, after all, did not look like love—she compounded with her conscience, and departed on her mission.

On arriving at the count's door, she met him just returning from their rendezvous: he expressed a hasty pleasure at seeing her so soon again, and without taking time to observe her "altered eye," he hastily seized the note, and running up stairs, perused it with no small delight.

"Thus, then," said he, "are my wishes crowned at last. Fate, I thank thee! or rather, De l'Espoir, I thank thy own cool courage!" All cool and calculating as he was however, it was some moments before he could subdue his joy at having seen the poor bird fly into the net, sufficiently to consider what she had said about trusting Sally: but when he did weigh the matter deliberately, he came to the determination that it was better to confide in her who already knew so much, than to convert her into a spy by choosing some one else as a confidant. And the more he considered, the more he saw the necessity there would be of having some third person to carry notes and messages between him and Gertrude. He was perfectly aware

nevertheless, that Sally would require no little management ; for though he succeeded in soothing her in the morning by an appeal to her vanity, he saw very plainly that the slightest circumstance would be sufficient to awaken her former suspicions of him, and that the least hint dropped on that subject to her young mistress, would end his hopes at one fell swoop. In this he judged truly ; but he did Sally less than justice when he thought, that, in order to allay late suspicions, he had only to profess former love. Even had her virtue (as she called it) not received the stimulus it did, by hearing of his depravity, she still had truth and principle enough, albeit a little vain and presuming, to shrink with horror from any open declaration of love to herself, both as a wife and mother. Before having recourse, however, to this expedient, which, after all, he thought it as well for many reasons to reserve to the last, De l'Espoir determined to sift out her opinion of his real plan of proceeding.

He summoned her accordingly to his presence, and threw out some hints of his intention of going *incog.* to England, to assist Miss Evelyn in her experiments upon her brother. But, before he had proceeded half-way in his disclosure, or hinted at Miss Evelyn's concurrence in it, Mrs. Whitecross burst out into such a torrent of abuse, and such downright, and rational representations of the madness and wickedness of such a scheme, coupled with threats of instantly informing Lord and Lady Luscombe of the whole business, that De l'Espoir saw clearly that she could never be brought to sanction it ; and that even persuasions from Gertrude herself, whom she affected to look upon as a mere child, would but stimulate her determination to betray the secret. In this emergency he had recourse to his original spell ; and having always kept in view the probability of its proving the most powerful, he had taken care to conceal whatever might have appeared inconsistent with it. He affected to consider for a moment what

else remained for him to urge ; and then, apparently driven by his feelings to speak the desperate truth, he fell upon his knees before Sally, and seizing her hand, he insulted her ears by a declaration that all he had said, all he had planned, all he had thought of, was only to cover the real object he had in view, namely, to get to England on any pretence for the sake of his love to her !

It is unnecessary to paint her indignation ; it was unfeigned and unbounded : for the whole circumstance was invested with everything that made guilt doubly guilty to a vulgar mind. She stormed and she preached ; but she had to do with one a thousand times her match in cleverness. He suffered her wrath to expend itself by its own force, and by degrees he ventured adroitly to throw in such hints of her noble conduct, as, on a mind like hers, could not fail to produce a sedative effect. Presently he became overwhelmed, grew penitent, confessed himself subdued by her eloquence ; then wept in horror

of his past crimes, all of which he failed not to lay to the account of that unfortunate scapegoat, disappointed love ; and finally, before he left her, had not only obtained her forgiveness, on his promise to abandon all thoughts of visiting England, but secured her reiterated promise not to drive him to his wicked courses again, from desperation at finding his hopeless love betrayed. Once more Sally left his presence highly satisfied with herself, and persuaded that nothing but her young lady's leaving Paris so immediately, should induce her to keep the secret of his infamy ; which, however, she was very glad to have a proper excuse to keep, as the disclosure of it now, would involve her, having already concealed the very important fact of her former acquaintance with him.

She was no sooner out of the house, than he, trusting at once to his quicker pace in walking, and superior knowledge of the town, left it also, and succeeded in arriving at Lord Luscombe's

hotel before her return. He inquired for Lady Luscombe, intending only to send up his card had she been visible ; but as she was out paying some farewell visits, he asked for Gertrude, and was admitted. All agitated and bewildered as she was, she felt but too happy to see him—at once to have her spirits reassured by his confident anticipations, and to make the necessary arrangements for their future meetings. And here Gertrude shrank with fresh horror from the manœuvring, and the clandestine intercourse, that she saw would be necessary, notwithstanding De l'Espoir's anxious efforts to keep it as much as possible in the background. He told her, indeed, that Sally was absolutely unfit to be trusted, and this the morning's disclosure tended to confirm ; and he had the courage and adroitness laughingly to hint, that as nothing could disabuse her of the idea of their being lover and beloved, instead of patient and physician, he had found it absolutely necessary to conceal from her the plan of his going to

England, as he plainly perceived that she had taken such a dislike to him, from the bare idea of his rivalling Major Vandeleur, as would induce her, in revenge, to do all she could to prejudice every one against him. This sounded so plausible, that Gertrude heard it undoubtingly, and blushed and laughed at the idea.

It was then settled that De l'Espoir was to leave Paris within two days after Gertrude and her party, and to repair immediately to Beauton, a small post-town about two miles distant from the park, and from thence to despatch a note to inform Gertrude of his arrival. She trembled when this awful step appeared so near; but De l'Espoir, like an able general, coolly rose to take his leave before she should have time to call up any more arguments against the plan, or look too closely into its various difficulties.

"Well, adieu for a short time!" he said. "Trust me, we shall see happier days. Make my compliments to Lady Luscombe, for I shall

not intrude again, as you must be much engaged."

She followed him to the door with undefined terror at the thoughts of where they should meet next, and a sort of lingering wish to keep the power of revoking her consent in her hand a few minutes longer. He was as anxious to escape for the very opposite reason. As they gained the hall, they were met by Sally, who, hearing that the count was in the house, and that Lady Luscombe was out, had some misgiving which induced her to form the resolution of summoning Gertrude away from him on some domestic pretext. She was too late, however; and the moment that De l'Espoir spied her, he repeated his adieus much more emphatically, and as if for ever, and departed.

Sally contented herself with saying, half to Gertrude, and half to herself, "Thank God, you're gone at last!" and returned to her packing.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ Charmed by her voice, the harmonious sounds invade
His clouded mind, and for a time persuade.
Like a pleased infant, who has newly caught
From the maternal glance a gleam of thought,
He stands enrapt the half-known voice to hear,
And starts, half conscious of the falling tear.”

Mrs. WHITECROSS had but a very few minutes set out upon her office as witness to the effects of animal magnetism, in giving an insight into the diseases of others, and inspiring a knowledge of the proper remedies, (I suppose by the power of the same unperturbed instinct which teaches dogs and other animals to select their medicines amongst herbs,) when the English post arrived with letters for Lord and Lady Luscombe, and one for Gertrude. The latter, it must be con-

fessed, was sufficiently alarming, considering that her father had, with the inconsiderateness that marked his character, if not his class, hitherto buoyed up her hopes far beyond the truth. It was as follows :

“ MY DEAR GERTRUDE ;

“ I do not wish to alarm you, but, as the time you proposed staying in Paris is already past, I feel the less hesitation in informing you that I do not think your poor brother has been so well of late. You will be very sorry to hear that poor old Mason is no more. He died in an odd way, after all. He had been poorly ‘ever since he came here, and for the last two or three days confined to bed : but at last, the third day, that d—d Miss Wilson went in to see him ; and whether it was the sight of her, or what, I don’t know, but she came out saying the poor old man was dead. I asked her what she had done to him. She declared nothing, but asked him how he was, and to forgive her ; upon

which he bid her go away in a weak voice ; and when she went nearer, (the d—d wretch!) to save him the trouble, she says, of speaking so loud, he tried to motion her away with his hand, and muttered something as if in his throat. She was frightened, she says, at the thoughts of his dying without forgiving her, and went up to the bed and fell on her knees ; but receiving no answer, she found he was dead. I was going to turn her out of the house ; but she looked so terrified and so sorry, and then Herbert is so poorly, that my heart failed me. I wish you could come home, my dear ; we are badly enough off without you. We have had our friend Mr. C—— here again, but he does not much like how poor Herbert is going on.

“ Your affectionate father,

“ GEORGE EVELYN.”

It must be acknowledged that few epistles could be less satisfactory than the foregoing, on such a subject. It fully succeeded, however,

in terrifying Gertrude nearly out of her wits, though, on what point to fix, she knew not. Was Herbert dying? Was his reason more alienated? or had it become madness? Not one of these questions could she solve; and when, throwing herself into Lady Luscombe's arms, she besought her to tell her what her letters from the same neighbourhood said, she could gather little more. Lady Luscombe, knowing that she should in vain seek to disguise the truth from her penetrating anxiety, thought it best at once to show her the passage in Lord Foxhill's letter. It ran thus: "Young Evelyn is rapidly declining: your friend Gertrude will soon be a splendid heiress."

It is really strange in what a careless manner, almost of congratulation, kind and good-hearted people will sometimes speak of an event that is perhaps to destroy for ever the earthly happiness of the object of their felicitations. On the present occasion, Gertrude merely said, "May I never live to see the day!" in a tone which would

have chilled the most unthinking, and proceeded to ask Lady Luscombe what was to be done.

The intended period of their stay in Paris was already elapsed, and Lord Luscombe had thrown out many hints of his wish to return home. His lady, however, gay and good-humoured, delighted with her reception in society, and all she saw around her, either turned a deaf ear to such hints, or laughed them off, from day to day. But as she was in reality kind and good-natured, and sincerely attached to her young friend, and distressed at being the cause of her absence at such a time, she now started up, and declaring that not one moment longer should be lost, she ran to Lord Luscombe's dressing-room, and informed him of the sad news. He regretted the cause, but was exceedingly happy at the effect; and lest any letters should arrive next morning to render such haste unnecessary, he heartily concurred in his wife's proposal that they should leave Paris that very evening.

This, however, was found impracticable ; but as early next morning as daylight permitted, they bade adieu to that gay city, and returned to England, every one of them with feelings very much in the same tone in which they had left it two months before ; Lord and Lady Luscombe gay, or contented, according to their different temperaments, and poor Gertrude with the same heavy and gnawing anxiety at heart, and only with the additional grief for poor Mr. Mason's death. On arriving at her father's gate, having parted with her friends at Lord Foxhill's house, where she had joined them on going, she stopped the carriage to make more particular inquiries, or at least to receive answers that she could more rely on, than those she received at Foxhill, and was somewhat relieved by learning that her brother had been considered better for the few last days, and was down-stairs. She hurried to the house, and there, in the summer sitting-room, the scene of so much of their former happiness, sports, and

studies, she found him seated in an arm-chair at the open window, apparently enjoying the soft evening breeze that came up the flowery declivity already often alluded to, laden with all the mingled sweets it afforded. Her father and Miss Wilson were also in the room, and they both came forward to receive her ; but even while receiving and returning their salutations, her eye anxiously wandered to the beloved invalid.

She saw beyond all doubt that he recognised her, and not only recognised her, but even made several efforts to approach and join in bidding her welcome ; but was each time prevented by some nervous fear, or bodily weakness, and again sank down into his chair. She flew towards him ; and alike fearful of agitating him, and unable to suppress her affectionate feelings, she knelt down before him, and laying her hands upon his knees, looked up into his face.

He was paler, and more haggard-looking, than when she had left him ; but his countenance decidedly, at that moment, expressed more of

intelligence. He smiled affectionately upon her ; and on her offering her lips to him, he stooped to receive the salutation, and said " Gertrude," in a soft low tone of pleasure and affection.

She burst into tears, which from the first moment of her entrance she had been struggling to restrain, and falling on his neck, she wept long and convulsively. All that had passed since they parted rushed back upon her mind. The doubts and fears, and hopes and prayers, she had gone through for him—the fearful responsibility which she had consented to incur for his dear sake, all crowded upon her heart at once, and she embraced him as the new-found, tangible object of all these emotions and all this suffering ; and with a feeling which can only be compared to that with which a mother embraces her new first-born, it seemed to her as if she had never loved him until now : he himself became aware of the excess of her emotion, though not of its cause, and gently asked, " Have I hurt you, Gertrude ?"

Her renewed embraces satisfied him that he had not ; and then he asked if she wept for coming home.

“ No,” she exclaimed ; “ Heaven knows how I have longed to return to you, dearest Herbert !”

“ I rather—I rather wonder at that, I think,” said the poor boy thoughtfully, and pressing his hand upon his forehead ; but the effort and the scene altogether overcame him, and he too burst into tears.

I do believe there never was one human being loved another as Gertrude loved her brother at that moment : it seemed as if the only thing that could recall him to consciousness, or natural feeling, was his love for, and sympathy with her ; and as she bent over and soothed him with her caresses, she made a vow in her heart that no other love, no overstrained sense of self-respect, no consideration of any kind, should stand between her and every effort for his recovery. In a few minutes, by checking her own

tears, she succeeded in drying his ; and pointing to the soft fall of the hill down which she had so often run to escape from him, and from her lessons, she asked him if he remembered chasing her there. He glanced quickly at the walk, then at her with a smile that was almost arch ; but instantly breathing a deep sigh, he suffered his head to droop into its usual position upon his breast, and his countenance resumed its listless expression.

To those who knew the manly character and spirit of the boy, these indications sometimes gave the idea that his mind was not as totally destroyed as would at other times appear, and even that he was not wholly unconscious of his state ; but that, some important function being impaired, he felt unequal to all mental exertion whatsoever, and remained passive and uncomplaining under the infliction.

After a little time, when he seemed to have become composed again, Gertrude went over to

her father, who had thrown himself upon the sofa during this scene.

“ My dear father !” she whispered, “ Herbert seems to me to be a great deal better than when I left him.”

Mr. Evelyn smiled an odd, cold, almost bitter smile.

“ Dear sir, you, being constantly with him, may not observe it ; but I assure you he never before manifested nearly so much recollection.”

“ Mr. C. does not think him better.”

“ That surprises and grieves me very much indeed. Don’t you perceive yourself, sir, that he seems more collected ?”

“ Yes, more collected ; but look at him now.”

She did look, and perceived him gazing after her, and again making weak and fruitless efforts to rise from his chair. He again pronounced her name. In an instant she was by his side ; and perceiving that his bodily strength

moment of her return home, lived in a kind of feverish excitement, expecting his arrival ; yet it was only when it had actually taken place, that she became thoroughly alarmed at the powerful engine which her own hand had set in motion ; and so great was her agitation at the instant, that it attracted the attention (albeit not very susceptible) of her humble companion, even to the extent of causing her to ask if she were ill.

“ No, no — not ill, Miss Wilson; but so terrified !” and she panted as if indeed she had found a viper in the note she still held in her hand.

“ Terrified ! ma’am ?” repeated Miss Wilson.

“ Yes. But ask me no questions. What *shall* I do ?”

Miss Wilson, judging that “ ask me no questions,” meant also “ nor answer any,” which being also congenial to her habits, took no notice of the last ; and Gertrude remained for a few minutes like one bewildered.

It was fortunate for her secret that there was not a more intelligent witness of her agitation. "What have I done?" again escaped her trembling lips; and although even peculiarly ignorant of the harsh construction which the world might put upon her proceeding, her heart whispered "Vandeleur!" in a tone of gentle reproach which she could not misunderstand.

De l'Espoir, however, showed himself well skilled in human nature, when he wished this to be the feeling that awoke within her, rather than more artificial ones, which, coming under the form of lessons of propriety, assume the sacredness of duty. For she, in her affectionate devotion to her brother, soon persuaded herself, that were Vandeleur himself, with all her own happiness, to be the sacrifice, she ought not to hesitate between them and that brother's recovery. And probably she would not have hesitated, dearly as she loved Vandeleur; for Gertrude's principles were as pure, and upright, as her affections were ardent; and they kept

each other in perfect and beautiful control. It was only where they seemed to her to clash, and to become inextricably entangled, to each other's destruction, that she could ever be led into error,—and this from her own guileless and unsuspecting nature.

It never ought to have been so. Alas ! it never ought to have become necessary for the general security of social order, that a check should be put upon our dearest and our sweetest feelings and sensibilities. Oh ! why, why did man destroy his Creator's first glorious plan of an earthly paradise ? Severely must he labour before he can bring back this ruined earth to that first blissful state !

No sooner did poor Gertrude come to this, as she hoped, proper and disinterested conclusion, than she felt the necessity of composing her spirits, and setting herself seriously to consider the steps that it now devolved upon her to take in this momentous business. For this purpose she retired to her own chamber, and there once more read over the count's epistle.

It was written with all the caution that it was possible to use against alarming her, affecting to look on the whole business in a light and matter-of-course sort of way; which, he hoped, would have the effect of soothing her. Still, final and minute arrangements he knew could not longer be deferred; and accordingly he informed her, that foreseeing every difficulty that might attend their interviews, he had determined on coming to the town of Beauton as a petty French jeweller, and had brought a few trinkets and baubles with him for this purpose: and begged of her in communicating with him through any intermediate person, (should such be necessary,) to remember this new character of his: but, in order to defer the necessity of any such confidence as long as possible, he informed her that on his arrival the day before, he had made all the inquiries he could, *à la dérobée*, concerning the situation of Beauton Park, &c. &c. and had the next morning himself, in person, reconnoitred

the grounds and demesne, which, indeed, nearly extended to the town. He then described a particular, secluded grove, where he implored Gertrude to consent to meet him that evening before dusk, as it was absolutely necessary that they should have, at least, one interview, in order to arrange matters previous to their commencing operations. Taking it for granted, he said, that her good sense would second him in this, he informed her that he should be in waiting there the whole evening until she appeared; but, by everything rational or consistent, he implored her not to suffer any childish alarm or uneasiness, or want of confidence in him, to induce her to think of betraying him to any one;—but, above all others, not to her busy, self-sufficient abigail.

There was something in the tone of this letter that displeased and chilled Gertrude. The necessity of an interview she could not for a moment deny: “But what does he mean by uneasiness, and want of confidence in him?”

she said aloud, though no one was present to reply. "What confidence? I'm sure it is he is so anxious to keep the secret, not I. Or does he mean—is it indeed come to this—that I am placing confidence in him by meeting him alone? If so, I will not do it; for this there can be no imperative necessity. I will take Miss Wilson with me; I know my power over her, and her habits of obedience will ensure her silence. But soft,—am I at liberty to betray Count De l'Espoir's secret? No, certainly not. I must then write, and ask his permission; but meet him alone in the dusk of the evening I will not. It is just what would shock Vandeleur, I know; and yet the evening, when my father and the servants are all engaged at or after dinner, is the only time I could be sure of being free from interruption. Heigh-ho! he is right in saying Whitecross is not to be trusted, she is so babbling. Well, I must write to him—and I hate that too. Heigh-ho! well, dearest Herbert, it is for you, and may Heaven grant that the end

may sanctify the means!—at all events, it is too late to consider farther about them now.” And with this fatal conclusion—so characteristic of frail mortality, whose thoughts are finite,—this conclusion, which has often silenced the last whisper of our good angel to rescue us from some yawning precipice,—she went to write to *De l’Espoir*.

Her newly-awakened alarms at his style, so different from that he used in Paris, she did not of course betray; but with that dignity of feeling which now and then broke out amidst her infantine confidence, as the blush of indignant virtue will sometimes startle us on the cheek of infancy, if wrongfully accused, she announced to him her determination not to give him the meeting he desired, unattended. She described Miss Wilson to him as far as was essential, and mentioned how fully she could depend upon her silence; and concluded by saying, that if she did not hear from him again, she should suppose herself at liberty to mention

the matter as far as she should deem advisable to Miss Wilson, and, accompanied by her, should meet him in the grove. She felt that she dared not bring him, upon any pretext, to the house, lest the prying eyes of Sally should light upon him.

As soon as her note was completed, she brought it herself down-stairs, in order to avoid ringing for her maid: for, although it was directed under the name of Dubois, which the count had assumed for the present, still Gertrude's conscience made her anxious to adopt every precaution against exciting suspicion. As she crossed the hall, she met the servant who had brought the note for her to the drawing-room, and inquired of him if the person who came with it still waited. He said not; that it was brought by a little boy, who, handing it in, said no answer was required, and instantly departed.

"This was to ensure my compliance," said Gertrude to herself; "but I hope I require

something more than so trivial, and apparently accidental a circumstance, to induce me to turn out of the common path of propriety."

"Then, William," she said aloud, "I must trouble you to carry this note to Beanton. Inquire at Mrs. Lane's, the grocer, for a French jeweller, and deliver this note to him yourself. It is necessary it should go instantly; so get your hat, and go out this way by the hall-door, and across the fields, and make haste back."

The man did as he was desired, Gertrude still keeping the note in her hand until he returned with his hat, and not aware that her deep blush and faltering accents at this her first connivance in anything like disguise or falsehood, together with her unusual expressions of haste, did not escape the man's attention; although it was not until after circumstances gave importance to such appearances that he thought of recalling them. He departed with the billet, and Gertrude retired to her chamber to tell herself, again

and again, that the die was now fairly cast, let it turn up what it might.

For the first time she congratulated herself upon her lover's absence, as she reflected that, had he been in the neighbourhood, or even had her mother lived, she had found her present undertaking almost impracticable. "But if it be successful," she said, "I shall consider these apparently fortuitous circumstances as direct interpositions of Providence in my favour."

Alas! how fallacious is the faith founded upon circumstance! The rules of right and wrong alone are immutable; we should never venture to look beyond them.

In the mean while, the day was passing over, and Gertrude received no answer from the count. She ascertained that the servant had delivered the note into his own hands, and had even, through rustic curiosity, spoken with him; so that there was no longer a doubt but that his silence was to be taken as permission for what Gertrude required.

In fact, provided her confidant could be relied on for a few days, so as not to defeat all by a premature discovery, De l'Espoir was rather pleased that there should be one witness of her voluntary intercourse with him ; while she, poor thing ! felt as if half the objections were removed by the confidence being extended to any one member of her own family.

As if the Fates were disposed to forward Gertrude's plans in every way, Mr. Evelyn, who seldom indeed dined alone, this day brought home two or three gentlemen with him to dinner ; and although Gertrude seldom deemed her long sojourn in the dining-room after the cloth was removed, either necessary or desirable, she left it even earlier than usual on this occasion, and requested Miss Wilson to accompany her to her chamber. Miss Wilson might have been a little astonished at the request, as it was rather an unusual one ; but I believe such a sensation never had had birth in her torpid breast. As soon as they were seated,

Gertrude commenced, with a seriousness and dignity of tone and manner, which the youngest and the gentlest will naturally assume over those of inferior minds, to enforce the necessity of the strictest secrecy on the subject which she was about to speak of. Miss Wilson promised obedience, of course ; and, indeed, when Gertrude recollected how very little inducement it afforded for her to break through her usual habits of silence, she almost thought the precautions she was taking were superfluous.

She proceeded to inform her that a Frenchman had undertaken to cure her brother ; but that, as her father had a great dislike to every one, and almost everything, appertaining to that nation, she thought it right and necessary to conceal the circumstance from him ; and as she did not deem it prudent or proper to meet the gentleman alone, yet must occasionally see him, in order to arrange and plan the different preparations for the cure, she had determined upon confiding in her, and taking her with her upon

these occasions. She concluded by desiring her to prepare to accompany her just then.

Had these circumstances, and this communication fallen within Miss Wilson's ken previous to her residence at Beauton Park, it is very probable the whole matter would have failed to excite even a passing thought ; but during her attendance upon Lady Alicia she had read many and many a novel, all, all about " the one loved name " of love ; and this continuing for several years, and being reduced to practice, as it were, in her own case, by the old fox-hunter's proposals, she could not remain (as was proved to poor old Mr. Mason's cost) altogether so dead upon the subject as she once had been. Still, the life imparted was like that conveyed by galvanism to the limbs and muscles of a frog. It served little other purpose than to astonish, scare, and terrify the spectators by its awkward and uncouth manifestations ; while not a spark was kindled in her heart to guide or to direct them.

When Gertrude first made her communication, no doubt of its veracity entered Miss Wilson's mind; but when she accompanied her through the demesne, across one or two fields to the specified grove, and there beheld the very handsome and gallant-looking *gentleman*, who hurried forward to meet her with an air and manner very strikingly different from that of "a quack doctor,"—as she had imagined him to be; and when she saw the undisguised rapture that sparkled in his brilliant eyes,—she said to herself at once, but in her own way, that, under pretence of curing the brother's head, he was come to wound the sister's heart.

Still, what had she to do with that? For Major Vandeleur she had no particular regard: indeed, all she knew of him was, that he had come to upset the establishment at Beauton as far as she was concerned. For, although he had readily joined with Gertrude in the propriety of settling an independence upon her humble friend, and though this had been distantly

and delicately hinted to her, yet such was her sluggish inertia, that anything like a change came to her like a calamity. From whom or whence that change should proceed was, then, a matter of little moment to her; and, indeed, if she reasoned at all upon the subject, it was to think that as in the former case her dismissal was a thing decided upon, she might, in that now before her, be better, and could not be worse. It was one of the consequences of Miss Wilson's sleepy intellect never to get more than one view of any subject at a time, just as if only a small part of her brain was in proper condition to receive an impression; and therefore generally the moment any idea entered, it became instantly established there as a fact, when others would discuss and perhaps reject it altogether. And a passing thought being to her as great an effort as the deepest consideration to a more powerful mind, it was attended with the same importance and conviction. Thus, though she heard not a word of love

breathed between De l'Espoir and Gertrude, although near enough to catch much of what they said, that circumstance went not one step towards removing the first impression which she had stupidly conceived, solely from his appearance being such as she had read of.

In the mean while, the idea of such a suspicion arising in her mind never entered into Gertrude's; and after undergoing a degree of nervous agitation during the interview, which obliged her to lean against a tree for support, she arranged with De l'Espoir that the first trial of the effects of animal magnetism on her brother's malady should take place the very next day! De l'Espoir had prepared her for the possibility of many trials being necessary, and she felt a kind of relief in hearing that it was more than probable that the first or second would produce no apparent effect whatever.

Had De l'Espoir been less deeply interested, he would perhaps have betrayed some impati-

ence at the nervous, and almost childish pertinacity with which the poor girl made him again and again recapitulate his strongest arguments in favour of the theory, even as a woman loves to have her ear refilled with the vows of love as fast as it transmits them to the brain or heart.

As the spring was now pretty far advanced, and the weather extremely fine for the season, and as the objections to introducing De l'Espoir into the house continued in full force, it was agreed that the best method to prevent discovery, would be for Gertrude to endeavour to bring Herbert to an arbour, which remained in what had once been a pleasure-garden, but which, as it was a considerable distance from the house, had of late years been abandoned almost entirely, and suffered to run wild. Gertrude alone sometimes strolled thither, for the sake of "lang syne," or to vary her rambles; and as the gravel-walk leading to it, though now overgrown with weeds

and grass, was still level, she had no doubt of being able to wheel Herbert thither in his garden-chair. Of his willingness to accompany her, too, she had little apprehension ; for, besides his ever gentle and complying temper, he was, when able to enjoy it, always fond of the open air, and all the delicious offerings it presents to the senses and the heart.

As soon as this spot was decided upon, and the hour appointed which was indeed to colour Gertrude's future fate through that of her brother, she parted from De l'Espoir and returned to the house with Miss Wilson. She maintained an absolute silence during their walk homewards, not so much either through necessity or design, as from the tension, as it were, of her nerves and heart, which was such that it seemed to her that the slightest indulgence to them would render them independent of all control.

It is scarcely too much to say, that from that moment, until the time arrived for her to lead her brother forth, the unconscious object of so

serious an experiment on his shattered constitution, the unfortunate girl was in a high fever. She neither ate nor slept; and, strange to say, she scarcely ever in the same interval of time prayed so little. Frequently, indeed, through the remainder of that evening and next day, whenever she found herself alone, she would fall upon her knees, cast up her hands and eyes to Heaven, and then bow her throbbing forehead to the earth; but it was rather in the energy of great excitement, that seemed instinctively to ask for pity and composure from above, than a rational prayer for a blessing on her undertaking;—she was literally unable to tell to Heaven or to herself that she had indeed determined on that undertaking.

Lady Luscombe happened to drive over to Beauton Park that day. As they sat at luncheon, Mr. Evelyn, observing the alternate absence and flutter of Gertrude's spirits, said abruptly, "You have not brought Gertrude home much better than she left us, Lady Luscombe."

"No !" she exclaimed in astonishment :
" why, I flattered myself she was quite another creature. She certainly was, in Paris. Perhaps, Gertrude, you are pining after your agreeable count, eh ?"

The vivid blush which conscience called into the cheeks of Gertrude at this malapropos sally, could not pass unnoticed. " Nay, never blush and look miserable about it," pursued her friend ;
" you know I am no tell-tale. Only make haste and forget him before a certain gallant soldier returns."

" She had better make good haste then," said her father, looking at her with some surprise ; " for he may be here sooner than she thinks for."

" I hope not, sir ! How do you mean ?" exclaimed Gertrude, turning to him in an alarm which she had not presence of mind to conceal.

Mr. Evelyn stared still more at her ; but she, recollecting herself, quickly added, " He pro-

mised not to make any attempt to see me until six months should have elapsed."

"Yes; but ladies seldom quarrel with such vows being forgotten."

"*I should*," she said very seriously. "Have you any reason, sir, to think Major Vandeleur will?"

"Nonsense, you silly girl! I mean that the six months are nearly over now; so we may lawfully expect his return, even on your own absurd terms."

"But he will of course write before he comes; don't you think so, sir?"

"Indeed, you know best what order you have him in."

"Well, good people," said Lady Luscombe, rising, "I must leave you to discuss that knotty point without my assistance, seeing I could no longer give unprejudiced advice to young ladies; so good-b'ye."

She drove off, and Gertrude retired to her chamber.

"Oh, that Godfrey had been here ! or Mr. Mason alive !" she now exclaimed to herself, with blanched and trembling lips. "Nothing should now prevent my telling them all. But it is all too late for that, and there is no one else whose judgment I could trust to. Oh, why did I not think of this before ! Yet this is nothing more than nervous weakness ; for have I not weighed the matter long and anxiously enough ?"

Then she would recapitulate to herself the most forcible of the arguments employed by De l'Espoir, and always concluded with saying, "At all events, he pledges himself it can do no harm."

Alas ! those pledges ! they are like the bond offered by the ruined spendthrift to borrow yet another sum, and may indeed prove availing to those who can be satisfied by revenge instead of payment, but are therefore most frequently offered to those who, with perhaps a broken heart, would cast them into the fire on finding their worthlessness.

At dinner Gertrude found it absolutely impossible to swallow one single morsel : the tension had extended from her heart up to her throat ; her face was exceedingly flushed ; and as she handed something at table to her father, and their hands met, such was the damp and death-like coldness of hers, that he looked up and exclaimed, “ Why, Gertrude, you certainly cannot be well, child—what is the matter ? ”

Will it be believed that the poor girl was so overcome—so oppressed with her lonely and awful secret, that she was upon the very point of bursting into tears, throwing herself into—even her father’s arms—and revealing all ? But even while she struggled for strength to make the effort, the remembrance of her promise came over her, and the inconsistency of her conduct appeared glaring in her eyes. She *gulped* down her tears, and pleading a severe headache, said she would stroll out into the air, which she was certain would refresh her.

" Well, do so," said Mr. Evelyn : " and harkye, Gertrude, as the evening is so fine, I wish you would take Herbert with you,—I think it would do him good."

Gertrude felt guilty as she answered, " I will, sir."

" But come here, dear ; I positively insist upon your taking this glass of Madeira. Why, you are absolutely trembling, and as cold as death."

" Indeed, sir, I would rather not ; I cannot swallow just now."

" Nonsense, child !——one can swallow wine when one cannot anything else. Here, I insist upon your taking it ;—why, you are now as pale as you were red this moment."

Gertrude took the wine, and left the dining-room, knowing that—her hour was come !

CHAPTER XIV.

Why do you bend such solemn brows on me ?
Think ye I bear the shears of Destiny ?
Have I commandment on the pulse of life ?

SHAKESPEARE.

HAD it been possible that, by some infernal machination of the Enemy of Mankind, the gentle, exquisitely feeling, and devoted sister, who would have sacrificed life, and fame itself, for the recovery of her brother, could, instead, have been wrought upon, for some deadly purpose, to work out his destruction, and that the moment for action was now at hand, Gertrude could not have trembled more violently, or felt a stronger beating at her heart, than when she now repaired to that brother's apartment to try to wile him

out to the destined scene, as she hoped, of his restoration to health and unclouded reason, by telling him of the loveliness of the spring evening, the delicious odours which that evening's breeze was rifling from the profusion of flowers all around, and the sweet singing of the birds, of which Herbert was always so particularly fond, that even yet he frequently dragged himself across his chamber to scatter crumbs outside his window for their support.

This happened to be one of his days of bodily debility, and his intellects, accordingly, seemed a little clearer. He looked towards the window, and then at Gertrude, as if there was a slight struggle between his feeling of exhaustion and his desire to yield to her wishes; but, as usual, the latter prevailed. His room had of late, since the weather had become finer, been changed, at Gertrude's suggestion, for one on the ground-floor, which had once been used as a breakfast-parlour, in order to save him

the fatigue or annoyance of being conveyed up and down stairs.

She now directed his garden-chair to be brought to the hall-door. As soon as he was seated in it, the servant who brought it asked if he should be required to wheel him. "No," Gertrude said; "I shall wheel him myself."

She frequently had done so; but this evening, as they passed close outside the dining-room, Mr. Evelyn hurried to the window, and throwing it up, exclaimed, "Now, Gertrude, why do you wheel that chair when you are so ill with headache? You really are very—very perverse.—Here, William," he called aloud, as he saw the man standing at the door,—“here; wheel Mr. Herbert about with Miss Evelyn.”

"My dear father, pray, no," said Gertrude, terrified and unhappy; "the servants are just going to dinner; and besides, Herbert and I would much rather be without them."

"Well, wheel that chair you *shall not*," he said peremptorily, for of late his temper had

acquired an irritability to which it was formerly a stranger. "Oh ! there's Miss Wilson. Here, Miss Wilson ; wheel Herbert's chair a bit, will you ? Gertrude is not able ;" and he shut down the window.

Gertrude was too happy to exchange the presence of the servant for one over whose very thoughts she felt she held control, to make any farther opposition ; and determining to dismiss her when they should come to the entrance of the old garden, she suffered her to wheel the chair so far.

" Thank you, Miss Wilson, that will do now ; Herbert and I will saunter about here for a little, but we will not trouble you any farther."

" Shall I wait, or return to wheel him home ?"

" Neither, thank you. My head is already better from the air, and I shall wheel him home myself : and don't mention to my father or any one where I am. Now, observe what I say ; because I do not wish to be intruded on, and

my father is too anxious about my headache ; so don't go in his way until I return."

Miss Wilson departed.

Gertrude and Herbert were now at what had once been the gate of the pleasure-garden ; and within it, at some little distance, stood an arbour, formed in the high and close beechen hedge which enclosed the garden, and which was sheltered by a grove behind. The arbour was spacious, having been in former days frequently used by the children and their young friends in their feasts of fruit and flower-gathering ; and the seats and benches used by them in those happy hallowed hours were still standing within it. The luxuriance and order of beauty around was all faded and gone—but still, as " many a garden-flower grew wild"—and as fragrant weeds were also in profusion about—such as wild geranium, thyme, and heaths of various kinds, it was a spot particularly frequented by bees, as its solitude caused it to be by birds.—And as the youthful and innocent pair, who once seemed

the Abel and the Adah of this earthly paradise, now entered it together—she for such a purpose—and he the unconscious object of that purpose,—there was something more than commonly interesting in the scene altogether:—that ruined garden, which still told of beauty past; and that shattered being, where still there lingered traces of mental and of personal perfection.

It had a powerful effect upon the feelings of Gertrude, as she thought upon the days of their childhood; when, two lovely and intelligent beings, they would, hand in hand, run on before their parents and attendants, until arrested by some trifling object, perhaps a pebble or a flower still new to them. The little girl, though perhaps equally attracted, would generally have been satisfied with wondering; while the more reflecting boy would run back with the object of his curiosity, have it explained by his attendants, and return to impart the information to his sister.

She remembered all this, for the same tenden-

cies had continued with little alteration in both ; and painfully, dreadfully did she now feel the contrast. There he sat, looking around him indeed, as if something struck him in the scene ; but it was only with that listless look that might have become infancy itself, when first the mother fondly tries to anticipate the dawning of intelligence ! And as a bird suddenly whistled a loud note in their ears, as if to ask the cause of their intrusion, or a bee buzzed past them as if to reconnoitre, he would look up at her and smile—a smile that literally appeared to dissolve her heart.

It was already past the appointed hour, and Gertrude caught a glimpse of De l'Espoir about the harbour. As, however, it was thought expedient that he should not appear to Herbert, in order to avoid any flurry to his spirits, the moment he perceived them at the gate he retired to the farther side, where, while the branches prevented him from being seen by those within, he should be near enough, not

only to superintend and support Gertrude in the event of any agitation or alarm, but even to hear all that should be spoken.

All villain as he was, he could not feel wholly unmoved, as he peered forth from his hiding-place in impatience at the delay: for some feeling inexplicable to herself, where she now again felt confident of success, had made Gertrude unwilling to hurry Herbert to his fate. De l'Espoir saw them at length enter the garden, Herbert leaning on his sister's arm, having at her suggestion left his chair, and undertaken to walk the few paces that remained. He was obliged to confess to himself that few things could be more affecting than their appearance at that moment. They were both deadly pale; but while the quiet repose in the beautiful countenance of the one showed that paleness to be the consequence of ill health, the almost convulsive though restrained agitation of the not less beautiful features of the other, only told of the wild tumult within.

She tried to pray, but could not ; every step or movement of her precious charge recalled her thoughts to earth ; and, with nervous anxiety, she felt desirous to guard or shield him from the slightest uneasiness, unwilling, as it were, to add one tittle to the trial that awaited him ; as if she had not risked her dearest hopes on that trial ! She had—but still her good sense sometimes whispered her, that what was powerful for good might be powerful for evil !—At these moments her prayers were comprised in the exclamation, “ My God ! my God ! ” and one time she was so carried away by her feelings, as hastily to clasp her hands together, forgetful of the poor invalid, who leaned heavily on her arm, and whom this hasty movement of hers shook off, and caused to totter a few paces.

Had Gertrude wantonly intended to distress or incommode him, instead of being rendered momentarily incautious by the very intensity of her anxiety concerning him, she could not have felt more remorse than she did when she saw his

debility, and the gentle expression of his countenance, as it seemed to ask why he was thus cast off. She flung her arms around him, as if to repay him doubly for the momentary withdrawal of her support, and laying her head on his shoulder, asked him to forgive her, while a flood of tears came to the relief of her pent-up emotions.

It always seemed as if the sight of Gertrude in affliction, had power to overcome the listlessness of Herbert's malady for the moment. He now bent and kissed her cheek, and then attempting to wipe away her tears, said, "Dearest Gertrude !"

She pressed her arm more fondly round him. "Say you forgive me, Herbert !" she exclaimed ; and then yielding to the torrent of feelings which her tears had given a vent to, she fell on her knees, and with a wild earnestness, which was far more appropriate to the impending, than the past offence against him, and which indeed was probably dictated by a vague anticipation of what the future might bring forth, she seized

his hand, and looking up in his face with a countenance of agony, repeated, "Herbert, will you not say you forgive me?"

The poor boy gazed on her with more of astonishment and intelligence than he usually exhibited, but could make no farther exertion than to repeat, "Yes, indeed." She was obliged to be content, and they proceeded to the arbour.

Herbert immediately sat down upon one of the old benches that remained there; and Gertrude, perceiving that he seemed, as was usual after the slightest mental exertion, to sink into a dreamy sort of languor, left him for a moment to receive her final instructions from the count.

She found him considerably less animated, if not less composed, than was his wont, and instantly caught alarm from the change. But he, perceiving this effect of his remorse, or weakness as he termed it himself, instantly chased it away by running over in his mind some of those sedatives, of which the human heart has so large a

store, ever ready to soothe again the startled conscience. They conversed for a few moments, when he contrived to reassure the flagging spirits of his luckless pupil, and going over again the most minute descriptions and instructions respecting the routine of gentle and monotonous movements, so especially calculated to induce sleep, or *somnambulism*, as it is technically called, he dismissed her, with a blessing, to commence her awful task.

Gertrude returned to the arbour. She gazed for a moment on the gentle, unconscious object of all that was going on, so vitally important to him ; and turning aside for a moment, once more to raise her eyes and hands beseechingly to Heaven, she drew a seat in front of his, and composed her spirits to commence the operation.

Nothing can be more simple and less influential than the process of magnetising would seem to be ; the entire exertion, and power, being in the mind and will of the magnetiser. The subtile fluid is supposed to be conveyed by the mere

rendering of the object passive enough to receive it,—that is, by lulling to repose whatever of his own faculties might be supposed so active as to resist it. For this purpose, the first movement is to take the hands of the patient, and gently pressing them, retain them in that position as long as may be deemed necessary, according to the state of the patient and other attending circumstances, before proceeding to the other methods of diffusion of the fluid.

This caressing movement from his kind sister, was of course received by poor Herbert merely as one of her usual testimonials of affection, the more perhaps as it was now accompanied with an intense look of tenderness and anxiety. Even when she changed that movement for the less familiar and more active ones, of passing the hands from the head downwards over the person of the patient, but without actual contact, though he at first stared a little anxiously at her, he finally smiled, and appeared rather to enjoy what he probably innocently conceived was done merely for his amusement !

I have said that the evening was soft, balmy, and genial ; the twitter of birds—the hum of bees—and the perfume of flowers, was about ; the spot selected was still and secluded. How far all these circumstances might have tended to produce a disposition to somnolency in the invalid boy, we may not determine ; but certain it is that Gertrude had not many minutes continued her softly lulling movements about him, when his gentle eyes began to look heavy, the transparent lids presently drooped over them, and he seemed overcome by slumber !—It was the desired effect ; yet poor Gertrude, with youthful inconsistency, felt as much alarmed at this proof of her power, as it were, over her brother's constitution, as if she had never hoped, prayed, laboured, suffered for it.

“ He sleeps ! ” she said softly to De l'Espoir.

“ Already ! ” was the reply, in a tone of pleasure.

But, although subdued almost to a whisper in order not to arouse the boy, the strange

voice, proceeding from directly behind him, not only scared away what probably had not yet been sleep, but caused him to start up and look around him with a wilder expression of countenance than he had ever before exhibited, and he uttered a faint shriek.

Gertrude became terrified, and deeply affected ; but remembering the reiterated cautions she had received never to suffer him for a moment to remain under the influence of terror, she commanded herself, and proceeded to endeavour once more to soothe and compose him, by a repetition of what had already so completely produced that effect. It would not do—the spirit of alarm was roused in the poor boy—he looked first inquiringly, then wildly, on her hands flitting about him ; a universal tremour took possession of him.

Gertrude, as we have said, had been particularly cautioned against suffering her own feelings to overcome her, so as to induce her to stop suddenly in her operations, probably to the

serious injury of her patient. Accordingly, although her heart was almost breaking, she forced herself to continue her operations, only rendering them as gentle, and even expressively affectionate, as was in her power. It would not do—his eyes continued rapidly and wildly to follow her hands—he glanced at her face and saw tears falling slowly over it. For a moment or two, he seemed as if spell-bound to his seat—but, in the next, he shuddered convulsively, and fell fainting into her arms!

Gertrude shrieked out to De l'Espoir, who immediately came to her assistance, and imploring of her to subdue her feelings, and not unfit her mind for her undertaking, assured her that everything was going on as well as possible. "He is merely overcharged with magnetic fluid," he said, "and we will soon relieve him of that;" and he proceeded to go through the process prescribed for that purpose.

For some time it did not appear to produce the slightest effect. De l'Espoir became alarm-

ed, and his manner evinced flurry and agitation. Happily, Gertrude was too much wrapped up in watching her brother, that she might welcome the first symptom of returning animation, to observe him. Besides, there are some anticipations so dreadful, that the mind positively refuses to receive them. Accordingly, she stood calmly by, not daring to admit the slightest apprehension of danger.

Seeing, however, that time was passing, and that the count's attempts to restore her brother's consciousness seemed to fail, she asked, in a tone almost sarcastic from subdued alarm, if she might apply her smelling-bottle to his nose. De l'Espoir made no objection; and whether it was from the influence of the pungent salts, or the manipulations of the count, or whether from a mere effort of nature, it boots not to inquire, but in a very few minutes the boy began to show symptoms of returning animation.

And now it is that the darkest cloud of un-

certainly hangs over the real wishes and intentions of the Count de l'Espoir. There can be no question that, with the first symptom of the unfortunate youth's recovery from the swoon into which terror had thrown him, the safest plan, in common cases, would have been for De l'Espoir to have withdrawn himself from his sight, and suffered that terror gradually to subside by the absence of the excitement. But whether it was that he really believed that it was his manipulations and operations which alone had commenced, and could perfect his recovery,—or whether his previous alarm had so far bewildered him as to cause his judgment at the moment to err,—or whether that apparent alarm had merely been the agitation that the worst of human beings must have felt, at seeing the near accomplishment of such hellish plans ;—certain it is, that, instead of withdrawing himself, he recommenced his gesticulations and movements round the boy more vigorously than ever ; so that when the un-

fortunate youth opened his eyes, he found himself still surrounded by, and subjected to, the same frightful and bewildering incantations,—and not now from his gentle favourite, but from a dark and foreign-looking stranger.

It was too much for his weak and shattered nerves and intellects to resist. He looked wildly and despairingly around him for his sister : she stood at a little distance, with fast cold tears pouring over her quivering lips and cheeks, but not venturing to interrupt the count in his operations. In that agonised moment, nature, habit, long association asserted their power—and as a bird, when pursued by the cruel hawk, has been known to seek shelter in the breast of man—so, though poor wretched Gertrude had been made the instrument first to inspire her brother with that cruel terror, instinct told him she was not his enemy — and, in the moment of his mortal agony, he no sooner caught a glimpse of her, than he shrieked “Gertrude ! Gertrude !” in a voice that might

have waked the dead by its piercing and helpless anguish—and making an effort to fling himself towards her, a fearful struggle overcame him—it became convulsive—he wrestled with it for a moment—and then—his pure and harassed spirit was at rest for ever !

No one who has once seen Death can ever again mistake his fearful aspect. De l'Espoir knew at a glance that the boy was dead ; but there are some young spirits so full of life themselves, never having seen, scarcely having thought on or believed in death, that they refuse to acknowledge it on its first appearance, especially if it assume the features of one they love. Such was the case with Gertrude : she flung her arms about her brother—alas ! around her brother's corpse — and kissing his lips and chafing his hands, endeavoured to revive him.

The count, distressed and alarmed, approached her. “ Away ! away ! ” she cried, waving him off with her hand, but looking not up from

her occupation,—“ Away ! he shall be terrified no more. Fool, fool that I was ! at the moment too when reason seemed dawning on him ! ”

He caught at the words. “ Know you not, my dearest young lady, that such is generally the forerunner of—of—— ”

“ Of death ? ” shrieked Gertrude, in a tone of interrogation. “ He shall not die ! God would not so deal with me. ” And then heating and stirring up the powerful salts, she again held them to his nose.

But this time it was in vain — and every moment was making it evident and more evident that Herbert Evelyn had passed away. Some vague feeling of this was forcing its way into Gertrude’s heart, but she would not listen to it. “ Here, ” she called to De l’Espoir, in hurried but commanding accents, — “ Here — perhaps he is overcharged with magnetic fluid ; relieve him from it again as you did before. ”

And she rose from her knees to make way for him.

De l'Espoir was now unaffectedly shocked, as well as terrified ; nothing else could have detained him so long in so perilous a situation. He approached Gertrude, and taking her hand, gave her to understand, with such precaution as the time and scene admitted of, that no earthly power could now restore her brother !

When Gertrude had first entered the arbour, she had thrown aside her bonnet ; and in the subsequent agitating scenes, her long dark hair had escaped from its confinement, and fell in unheeded profusion about her face and neck. Any object will serve the overwrought nerves to exhaust their energy upon. She now twisted her hands in her dishevelled tresses, and with eyes far started from their sockets, cheeks of a ghastly paleness, from which they never afterwards perfectly recovered, and lips as white, and literally foaming from the gasping manner

in which her breath forced out its passage, she stood before De l'Espoir on the very verge of madness ! She uttered not a shriek, or word, or sound, except one long protracted articulation of the interrogatory monosyllable, " A—y— ?" and continued fixedly gazing on him, as if to save herself from ocular demonstration of the overwhelming fact.

De l'Espoir, all villain as he was, felt at that moment that Gertrude and her estates were dearly purchased, and literally shuddered at the sight of the state to which his machinations had reduced that lovely pair. He approached the unfortunate surviving victim in this moment of awakened feeling, and clasping her in his arms, of which she not only appeared, but in reality was, utterly unconscious, he whispered every tender epithet he could think of, mingled with anxious hints that nothing now remained for her but to fly with him, and find consolation in his devoted affection. Had it been the rattlesnake itself which had exerted its baneful influence to

subdue her spirit to its own destruction, Gertrude could not have remained more utterly unmoved, and seemingly insensible of all he uttered.

He was at a loss how to understand her silence and abstraction, for she neither shed a tear, nor breathed a sigh, but continued to gaze on him with a glassy eye, when his attention was most fearfully diverted from her by the voices of persons close at hand.

It has been mentioned that the garden was neglected of late years; and the walks, overgrown with weeds and grass, returned no echo to the foot as it fell upon them; so that ere De l'Espoir had time to look round, even without changing his position, two gentlemen already stood within the entrance of the harbour. The age of the one, and the strong resemblance which his handsome features bore to Gertrude and her brother, and the military travelling dress, together with something remembered of the former appearance of the other, served to

convince him at a glance that he stood confronted with the father and the lover of her, and the father and intended brother of him whom he had destroyed.

Gertrude also recognised them at the same instant, as was evident from a certain undefinable expression which struggled through the rigidity that had taken possession of her features. But although De l'Espoir had mechanically released her from his embrace the moment he perceived them, instead of making any attempt to address them, or evincing the slightest surprise at the unexpected appearance of her lover, she merely pointed downwards with terrific calmness to the body of her brother, which still lay stretched where it had fallen. Hitherto she had avoided looking towards it, as if yet resisting the dreadful conviction ; but now her eyes uncontrollably lighted upon it. She gazed and gasped wildly and loudly for a moment, as if she would scare away Death itself ; then flinging herself, or ra-

ther suffering herself to fall with violence on the body, she shrieked "Herbert? Herbert?" in so heart-rending a tone of interrogation, as caused every one present involuntarily to press their hands on their ears; and would, indeed, had one spark of life remained, have called it forth to tell her she had not done the deed. The voice was one of loud and distracted appeal—almost, you would have said, reproachful, in its shrill agony: but, no, no,—that heart which would have responded to soothe her was hushed for ever, and she found indeed that she but addressed

"The dull cold ear of death."

Mr. Evelyn and Major Vandeleur, who had from the moment of their hasty entrance literally stood transfixed with horror, and as if rooted to the earth, were restored to consciousness, or at least to motion, by Gertrude's wild scream: and although Vandeleur was certainly at the moment assailed by, perhaps, all the most dreadful feelings to which man is liable, when

he beheld his betrothed bride apparently receiving the caresses of another, and her only brother, his beloved friend, lying at the same time a corpse at her feet ; still, when he heard that soul-drawn shriek, and saw her, in her hopelessness of awaking her brother, seize his cold hand and press her throbbing forehead into it, his own burning anguish was lost in pity for her, and he made an attempt to go forward to raise her from so dreadful a position. But the unfortunate father, whose feelings he had overlooked, at the same moment seized his arm to keep himself from falling, and, after two or three ineffectual attempts to speak, at last uttered, in a sort of hoarse whisper, the words, “ Ask them—ask them what it is.”

When Vandeleur and Mr. Evelyn entered the harbour, De l'Espoir's back was towards them ; and although he instantly turned round, Vandeleur had already seen that which made everything and everybody else a matter of little moment to him ; and, in fact, he had as yet not

raised his eyes from Gertrude and her brother. On this appeal of the wretched father, he slowly and loathingly turned them to the stranger. Memory for a moment deserted him, although something in the whole appearance was familiar to him. It was but for a moment : his eye soon ran greedily over the dark and handsome countenance—the tall and gentlemanly figure : its pupil visibly began to contract ; he drew his breath inwards for a moment—took one more scrutinizing survey—then dismissing every remaining doubt, slowly and emphatically pronounced the words, “ So ! my schoolfellow, De Brons ! ”

De l'Espoir, whose feelings towards his fated rival did not require the additional exasperation of the haughty or contemptuous survey he had been obliged to undergo, touched his hat as haughtily, and feeling that concealment was at an end, replied, “ The Count De l'Espoir, sir.”

“ Then, Count De l'Espoir, M. De Brons, or whatever name may suit you now, in God's

name, what is the meaning of the scene that is now before us?"

De l'Espoir hesitated for a moment; he felt that his fate through life depended wholly upon his conduct in this interview—almost upon his next answer. He took his resolution. "That it is a strange scene and an afflicting one to you, sir,—if you are, as I judge, Major Vandeleur,—I can imagine: nevertheless, from me you can receive no explanation of it. Your right to demand it at my hands I might question; but, instead, I tell you for your own sake to forbear the inquiry;" and he threw into his countenance a sinister and hellish expression.

"This will not avail your purpose, sir: you forget you speak to one who knows you of old: account for your clandestine, unauthorised appearance here under such fearful circumstances, or the vengeance with which I shall visit you where you stand, shall send your infamy to the very ends of the earth."

"Vengeance for what, sir?" asked De l'Espoir with startling coolness.

“For what, sir? Can you look before you and ask for what?”

De l'Espoir smiled a cold and meaning smile ; but ere Vandeleur had time to ask again what that meaning was, Gertrude, who had remained with her forehead only kept from the cold earth by her brother's hand—almost as cold—but which was kept from becoming utterly so by the few scalding tears that escaped from her eyes without her consciousness,—on hearing Vandeleur's loud and angry tones, raised her head from its position, and looking up at her father, said, in a kind of confidential, hissing whisper, which fell like molten lead drops upon the nerves of all present, “*Father ! I did it !*”

It was neither madness nor idiocy which dictated these fearful words ; it was simply that her mind was so shattered—so decomposed, as it were,—that it admitted but of the one overwhelming idea, and that to be expressed in its simplest form. Every one made some involuntary movement expressive of his horror at her gate : her father, ever more partial to his son

than to his daughter, seemed to recoil from her even for the very words.

De l'Espoir looked at her with an expression of pity evidently intended to be observed ; while Vandeleur, feeling that, whatever had been her fault, her sufferings now atoned for it, advanced to her, and forcibly raising her from the ground, (for she would have resisted his efforts,) implored her, by every feeling that ever was dear to her, to compose herself, and try to give them some account of what had happened. As his voice and manner resumed something of its former tone and tenderness, it seemed to produce some little effect upon her recollection ; for, turning her head towards him as he supported her, she looked in his face with a kind of inquiring and softening curiosity.

He repeated his entreaties. " Oh, Godfrey ! Godfrey !" she said gently, but without any particular expression ; but as her eye again glanced at the body of her brother, she grew wilder, and raising herself from his supporting arms, she

seized his wrists in her hands as if for security, and said, "Well, Godfrey, what would you with the fratricide? Have I not already told my father?"—and with terrifying distinctness and solemnity she repeated the words — "*I—killed—my brother!*"

She finished with a faint sound, something between a sigh, a shriek, and a moan of heart-sick despair. Godfrey himself, although convinced that grief had disordered her intellects, now started as far back as the strange and nervous grasp she had taken of his wrists would admit of; but her father, whom nothing of the kind restrained, and who was wrought up to absolute frenzy between De l'Espoir's insinuations and her own confessions, made a stride towards her, and, had not Vandeleur, with a wrench releasing his hands, sprung up in time to arrest him, would have struck her to the earth!

The unfortunate girl, whose intellects had already been shaken almost to imbecility, was

now finally bewildered and overwhelmed. She had felt her lover start from her;—she saw her father lift his arm to strike her, and at the same moment felt Vandeleur wrench his hands from her grasp.—In her terror she mistook the object of his sudden and violent movement, and only feeling that she was condemned and abandoned by the world, and that De l'Espoir alone could bear witness to her motives, she fled with a shriek towards him to ask that explanation; but, ere she could utter a syllable, fell fainting into his arms.

This was too much for Vandeleur to bear. He sprang towards her to drag her from her hateful resting-place; but De l'Espoir, coolly drawing a pistol from his breast, (which, anticipating the possibility of some interruption, he had brought with him,) cocked it on the instant, and told him to advance a step farther at his peril.

Vandeleur, already infuriated, and only rendered desperate by this threat, closed with him instantly, and attempted to wrench the weapon

from his hand. De l'Espoir fired, and the contents lodged in Major Vandeleur's right side and hip. He fell instantly, utterly disabled, but called out to Mr. Evelyn to secure the ruffian whom alone he believed to be the author of all the misery around them.

De l'Espoir smiled contemptuously, and, producing another loaded pistol, convinced them how useless any farther opposition to his will must prove.

In this cruel dilemma Mr. Evelyn knew not what to do. Vandeleur's life-blood seemed welling from his wound, fearfully stimulated by his agitation; and as he was already becoming faint, it was evident that in a few minutes more he would, if unassisted, be little better than Herbert was himself. He saw that there was no chance of saving him but by hurrying to the house and summoning that assistance; yet, unwilling to leave De l'Espoir sole guardian of all he held dear on earth, though without Vandeleur's reasons for suspecting his worst

designs, he said, "Man, whoever you are, or whatever your intentions, at least convey my daughter to the house, since you will not leave her; and there let us, if possible, understand each other."

De l'Espoir indulged in another of his sardonic sneers. "Would it not be as well to know the young lady's own wishes upon that subject first?" he asked. "Methinks you have seen enough already to make you at least doubt that such would be her choice;" and he looked down on the lovely form which still lay lifeless on his arm.

Vandeleur, though now speechless, seemed not yet to have lost all consciousness, for he was seen to writhe, and even heard to utter a faint moan.

"By Heaven, it is too true!" said Mr. Evelyn, relapsing into fury against his unfortunate daughter, which had for the moment been so fearfully diverted: "and this explains what Lady Luscombe hinted, and her own horror of

Vandeleur's return. D—n me if another valuable life shall be lost by her ! and I care not if I ever see her again !” So saying, he left the harbour as hastily as his limbs, shaking and tottering from agitation, would admit of.

He was no sooner out of sight, than De l'Espoir, raising the wretched Gertrude in his arms, regardless of a convulsive movement and a hoarse cry from her still more wretched lover, bore her from the harbour before his eyes, and across the fields to an opening from the road, where he had a post-carriage and four horses in waiting, merely on the chance of their being required that evening.

Nearly an hour necessarily elapsed before Mr. Evelyn returned with the servants ; and by that time Vandeleur was not only speechless, but apparently without life or motion. No trace of the fugitives of course remained ; and Mr. Evelyn, really feeling, as he said, indifferent about ever seeing his wretched daughter again, and believing De l'Espoir to be her choice, de-

ferred, in the confusion that ensued, all active search after her, until the travellers had indeed gained such an advantage as to elude all chance of being overtaken. We shall therefore leave them in unmolested progress on their journey, and in the next chapter endeavour to account for the sudden and unexpected return of Major Vandeleur.

CHAPTER XV.

Yet do I live?—O how shall I sustain
This vast, unutterable weight of woe,—
This worse than hunger, poverty, or pain,
Or all the complicated ills below !
She in whose life my hopes were treasured all
Is gone. She lives on some far happier shore;—
She lives—but, cruel thought ! she lives to me no more !
SHAW.

HERBERT EVELYN had been visibly declining in bodily strength for some time before his father thought it necessary to inform Gertrude of the circumstance. With Major Vandeleur, however, he was less reserved ; and to him he communicated that Mr. C——, in his last visit, had expressed his apprehensions that the boy's constitution was giving way ; but reiterated his charges to Major Vandeleur, not to cloud Gertrude's present enjoyment by imparting news

for which she could point out no remedy. In this, as may be supposed, Vandeleur fully acquiesced.

When poor Mr. Mason died, Mr. Evelyn wrote to Vandeleur again; but having no system in his proceedings, and not excelling in epistolary talents, he omitted to mention to him his determination now to inform Gertrude of the truth, and to summon her home. Accordingly, Major Vandeleur had no prospect before his mind's eye but his beloved young friend, left to the cares of those he knew to be very incompetent to the task; and as Gertrude's last letter to him made no mention of any time for her return, though only a few weeks now remained of his probationary period, he thought his best plan would be to procure his leave at once; to proceed in person to watch over Herbert; and if Gertrude continued inexorable about seeing him before the stated time, he settled to go to London for the very few days that he thought it probable would remain between the time of her return and the expiration of the six

months. Mrs. Whitecross's letter reached him, but it added not one spur to his impatience to return ; so perfect and undoubting was his confidence in her truth and affection : and he merely attributed it to the well-meaning, but vulgar mind of an officious woman, who saw a lover in every man of more than ordinary civility.

In pursuance of this plan, he wrote to Mr. Evelyn, saying he would be at Beanton very soon after his letter ; but, in his turn, desiring him not to write this his intention to Gertrude, as, in consequence of her prohibition, it would require all his own eloquence to procure his pardon.

Mr. Evelyn paid very little regard to all such prohibitions, and especially from his daughter ; and that he did not inform her of it, was much more in order to procure himself the pleasure—or, as he termed it, the “capital fun”—of their mutual surprise, than in obedience either to her wishes, or even to those of Vandeleur. Still, as the time drew near, he attempted

to hint it to her; but her reception of that hint, though only making him more determined to laugh and set at nought such whims, had the effect of making him avoid any discussion upon the subject. How he afterwards interpreted her exclamation on that occasion is already evident.

Gertrude had not long set out upon her fatal expedition with her brother, when Major Vandeleur arrived. His first inquiries were of course for Herbert.

Mr. Evelyn said he was out.

“Out! I’m glad to hear he is able to be out. Who is with him?”

Mr. Evelyn stammered for a moment; then, recollecting himself, said—“Miss Wilson. But come, and we’ll look for them: they cannot, I’m sure, have gone far.”

Vandeleur, heartily pitying his poor young friend for being consigned to the companionship of so obtuse a being as Miss Wilson, readily agreed to set out in quest of him.

They searched several of the walks in vain;

but at length Miss Wilson appeared in sight. "Why, is not that Miss Wilson?" said Vandeleur. "What can she have done with Herbert?" But turning to Mr. Evelyn, and seeing no alarm in his countenance or manner, he only hastened his steps to meet her.

Miss Wilson, however, on perceiving them, remembered Miss Evelyn's injunction to her, and turned to avoid them. Mr. Evelyn called after her: she affected deafness and held on her course, for obedience was the alpha and omega of her code of duty; in fact, it seemed as if she could never of her own free will resist whatever impulse was last given to her. Mr. Evelyn, however, had no mind to resign his share of this her single virtue; he therefore called again, and hastened his steps almost to a run.

Vandeleur, concluding that it was the sight of him which had scared her, laughingly paused, to suffer Mr. Evelyn to come up with her alone; but the odd creature actually pursued her way, unmindful of his repeated calls, even when he

was close behind her, until he was absolutely obliged to seize her by the shoulder to stop her.

"What is the meaning of this, Miss Wilson? Why the devil don't you stop or answer when you are called? Where is Miss Evelyn?"

"I don't know, sir."

"You don't know! Why, didn't I tell you to wheel Herbert's chair?"

"I did, sir."

"Where to?" A dead pause. "Why don't you speak? Has anything happened?"

"No, sir; no, indeed."

"Then, d—n it! why don't you give me an answer?" and his manner grew irritable as it was wont of late to be.

Miss Wilson was frightened; and not having art enough for any evasion, though silence was her forte, she now answered—"Miss Evelyn, sir, bid me not tell you where she was."

"How! And where's Mr. Herbert?"

"With her, sir."

"Tush, you idiot!" he half muttered and half pronounced. "Well, I insist on knowing where

they are. Speak this moment, I command you."

"I wheeled Mr. Herbert, sir," she now whimpered, "to the gate of the old East-garden, and I left them there."

"Well, go—to the devil!" he said; but we will hope that, as he had the grace only to finish the sentence as he turned to rejoin Major Vandeleur, she escaped without hearing her destination, lest in that moment of her obedience being enlisted on Mr. Evelyn's side, she might have thought it her duty to obey him to the letter.

"Well, have you made out about Herbert?" asked Vandeleur.

"Oh yes, I have. Come on. She left him in the East-garden."

"What, alone!"

"Oh no: never mind; ask no questions."

Vandeleur stopped short in his walk, and fixed his eyes on his companion. "Is it possible?" he asked, suddenly and anxiously.

"Nonsense! is what possible?"

"*Is Gertrude here?*"

"D—n that Miss Wilson !" was the reply ;
"only for her you never would have guessed."

"My dear sir, what had she to do with it ?
I heard not a word that passed between you : I
assure you it was entirely your own manner be-
trayed you. But is it really the case that my
dear love is here already ?"

"Ay, but *she* flurried my manner, the wretch !
and put me off my guard. Indeed it was Ger-
trude's own doing at bottom."

"Does she then know I am coming ?"

"No, not she ; but, in one of her whims, she
desired that idiot not to tell me where she was."
And he spoke so peevishly from being disap-
pointed of the full enjoyment of the double sur-
prise he had planned, that Vandeleur thought
the sooner he removed his sweet bride out of
his power the better. Nothing, however, could
at that moment long damp the rapture he
felt at finding her so near him ; and seeing
nothing in what her father called her whim, but
some little innocent device of her playful spirit,

he with infinite difficulty restrained his steps to Mr. Evelyn's pace.

Of the scene that awaited them the reader is already aware, and it is needless to go over it again.

It is quite impossible to convey any idea of the consternation of the servants, on Mr. Evelyn's return to the house, at the almost incredible events that had taken place in one short hour, or very little more : their young master dead, no one knew how—their young lady eloped with a stranger of whom no one had ever heard—and Major Vandeleur returned unexpectedly within that hour, and now apparently a corpse likewise !

One and all they followed Mr. Evelyn back to the arbour, except Mrs. Whitecross, whom her young lady had sent on some commission from which she had not yet returned ; and Miss Wilson, who, fearful alike of meeting Mr. Evelyn or his daughter, had extended her walk beyond her wont.

When at length Mrs. Whitecross did return,

she was amazed at the unusual stillness that pervaded the yard and out-offices of the house. Recollecting, however, that it was about the servants' dinner-hour, she entered their eating apartment. There she found the remains of their dinner indeed, but evidently abandoned in a haste and confusion far beyond that permitted even at Beauton Park. She was still more amazed, when she went through the rest of the servants' apartments, and could nowhere see anybody. Bashfulness, however, was not her foible ; and accordingly she hastened to the drawing-room door, and gave two smart taps at it. No answer was returned. She opened the door : the room was deserted. She turned to the dining-room, and hesitated not to apply eye and ear alternately to the key-hole. It was in vain ; neither sight nor sound repaid her.

Her courage, great as it was, did not amount to running the risk of an abrupt intrusion upon Mr. Evelyn ; so she hurried up stairs, and running through the few rooms that were now

inhabited, and finding them all deserted, she shrieked aloud with terror. Echo only replied to her ; and hurrying down stairs again, and hastily peeping into Herbert's room as she passed, she muttered " Mr. Herbert and all !" and escaped from the house into the lawn.

As she crossed the front hall, Major Vandeleur's portmanteau and travelling trunk caught her eye : " Oh ! this is all enchantment together !" she exclaimed, rubbing her eyes. " Let me think : did I taste anything at the milliners' that they could have put any drug into ?—not a drop. What is come to me ?"

She looked around her again, and now in the distance she saw a crowd advancing slowly through the trees ;—for, evening as it was, the news had spread through the air, no one knew how, and several persons had fallen in amongst the domestics of the family.

Mrs. Whitecross hurried towards them. The first person whom she distinctly saw, supporting the head of his beloved master, was her own

husband, who had returned with Vandeleur. It was no time for welcome—she looked a little farther—and saw the dead body of Herbert ! Sally Whitecross, though conceited and presuming, was good-natured and affectionate. She was obliged to catch by some one's arm to keep her from falling,—or, as she termed it herself, from “dropping,” at this appalling spectacle; and it was some minutes before the poor woman's hysterical choking permitted her to burst into loud wailing and to ask what had happened.

No one could tell. And as their feelings were as yet too sincerely engaged to allow their imaginations to fabricate a story, they indulged in the mysterious, and only gloomily shook their heads.

“Oh, my heavens ! my poor young lady ! what will become of her when she hears it ! Does no one know where she is ?”

“No one, indeed,” some one whispered : “they say she 's gone entirely.”

“Gone entirely ! What do you mean ? gone where ?”

Again, though no one knew how the whisper had been spread, or with whom it originated, for no one could recall what words fell from Mr. Evelyn in his distraction, but so it was, that every one had a vague idea that Gertrude was gone off with a foreign-looking stranger; and this was now conveyed to Mrs. Whitecross. She uttered a loud scream, which reached even Mr. Evelyn's ears; although he, unwilling to have his anguish exposed to the gaze of the strangers who had assembled, hung considerably behind. Fearing that some alarming change had taken place in Vandeleur's state, he hurried forward to inquire what had happened. Mrs. Whitecross forgot all her fears of him in her consternation, and running up to him, cried out, "Oh! sir, for God's sake tell me, is it true that Miss Evelyn is carried off by a Frenchman?"

"It is but too true that she is gone."

"Then may God pity the poor child! Oh, sir! oh, husband! oh, William Whitecross!

there is no time for further concealment! the truth must be told!—the *Comte de l'Espoir* has mistaken *Miss Evelyn* for me!”

On hearing this speech, not a doubt even entered any one's mind but that Sally's brain had turned. Her husband, under this impression, tenderly consigned his master to the care of whoever stood next him, and turned to console his wife. “Compose yourself, compose yourself, Sally,” said he; “don't talk so wildly, dear. But do you know anything of this Frenchman?”

“Know anything of him! Oh, William!” she sobbed out, falling on his shoulder, “it is true what I have said. It was *me* he wanted—it is”——and she hesitated, with a natural feeling of reluctance, to name to her husband her former wooer as being again an acquaintance.

But, while she hesitated, Miss Wilson—for even her inertia was overcome by the general attraction—joined the sad procession, and hearing Mrs. Whitecross's last words, was roused enough by the tumult around her to say, “No

such thing, no such thing, woman ; the gentleman has been meeting and courting Miss Evelyn. And having calmly made this announcement, she was timidly advancing on tip-toe to see what had befallen Herbert in the short period since she left him, when Mr Evelyn, seizing her by the arm, exclaimed, " What is that you say about this man meeting Miss Evelyn ? When—where, that you could know of ? and how have they destroyed my child ? " But the very words softening his feelings, he again remembered that there were too many witnesses of his emotion, and determined to stifle further anxiety to learn the particulars, until they should reach the house, and until Vandeleur, nearly as deeply interested, could attend to them.

As the first step taken by Mr. Evelyn when he had returned from the harbour, after Major Vandeleur's wound, was to send off his fleetest hunter for a surgeon, who resided in the town of Beaton, the procession did not arrive many

minutes before he did. Of course, his first glance at poor Herbert was decisive; but of Major Vandeleur's state he was very doubtful. The ball, though it had passed quite through the lower part of his side, had touched the hip-joint, and, the surgeon feared, had fractured the bone.

Quiet was of course prescribed above all things. But as that, under existing circumstances, could only be the result of utter insensibility, no sooner did Vandeleur, under the surgeon's hands and the influence of restoratives, recover his faculties and speech, than he insisted upon making every possible inquiry respecting the dreadful, and indeed most mysterious, events of that fatal evening.

Mr. Evelyn and the surgeon would both have dissuaded him, the former assuring him that he had sent to have Gertrude sought for; but there was a cool decision in Vandeleur's manner, that showed them opposition would be fruitless. Accordingly, the surgeon, saying he would return

to Beanton to make some necessary arrangements previously to taking up his abode at the Park, withdrew ; and Mr. Evelyn informed Vandeleur exactly of what had fallen from the two women, and of which he had not yet had time to inquire farther.

Nothing could of course be more distracting than such intelligence proved, as far as it went ; for though Vandeleur, notwithstanding all that appeared against it, would sooner have doubted his own faith and truth than that of Gertrude, he knew not how to account for Miss Wilson's assertion—she who was simple truth itself, from the mere incapacity for invention. Mrs. Whitecross's letter also now flashed across his mind ; and though he did not for a moment believe—scarcely listen to the speech of that lady, as to herself being the object of the Frenchman's pursuit, he still admitted not a doubt even to enter his mind but that his young and artless Gertrude had been led into some fatal snare, and was far more sinned against than sinning. It

scarcely required a moment's consideration for him to arrive at this conclusion; and even De l'Espoir could, in his utmost malice, have wished his rival no deeper agony than that which assailed him while Mr. Evelyn went to summon Sally Whitecross to his presence.

She entered his chamber, her eyes swollen with weeping; and instantly advancing to the bed on which Vandeleur lay, she burst out again into such floods of tears, that she was unable to speak for some minutes, and hid her face in the counterpane. As soon as she was a little recovered, she clasped her hands together, and with eyes still streaming, and an air of sincerity and contrition which could not be mistaken, she exclaimed, "Oh! Major Vandeleur!—oh! my dear master! I am a wretch—I am a wretch!—you never can forgive me! I have destroyed you and my dearest young lady!" She sobbed violently again.

Mr. Evelyn desired her to command herself, and consider the state of Major Vandeleur's

health and feelings. Vandeleur was himself unable to speak, from agitation and alarm of he knew not exactly what kind.

“ Oh ! I will, I will, sir ! But to think of it, the base deceiving villain !—and I that ought to know so much of human nature ! Certainly, after all, William Whitecross, you know more, and are the best man and husband living.”

She then, without much farther apostrophising the absent, or tantalizing the anxiety of those present, proceeded to give a circumstantial account, from beginning to end, of Gertrude's and her own adventures with the Count De l'Espoir, and of the infatuation which prevented her from putting Gertrude on her guard against him by disclosing the truth.

At a glance Vandeleur beheld, displayed before him, the whole of the diabolical scheme that had been laid for his unhappy bride, and which, alas ! had been but too successful. That he could not wholly acquit her of being too easily

duped by a stranger, was only the necessary consequence of his never having even heard of the arguments which that stranger had quoted in support of his theory ; but his fond affection, and consideration of her youth, inexperience, and exalted motives, not only prevented him from throwing a shadow of blame over her, but caused him more deeply to execrate the villain that could take advantage of such a creature, whose intelligence was only inferior to her confiding purity and innocence.

Mr. Evelyn, however, was not so easily convinced. He remembered Lady Luscombe's hints, and Gertrude's own confusion at the thoughts of Vandeleur's return ; and even should they all prove to have been subservient to the same end, not such he conceived the assertions of Miss Wilson.

" Call her in," was Vandeleur's only reply, with a cold smile which told sufficiently how lightly he held farther doubts.

" Miss Wilson," said Mr. Evelyn as she entered, " did you not say that this stranger

has been meeting with, and courting my wretched daughter for some time?"

"Not for some time, sir; only they did meet before."

"When? and where?"

"In the far grove, sir, yesterday evening. I went with Miss Evelyn."

"What makes you think he was courting her?"

"I saw his eyes, sir."

"But did you hear any of their conversation?"

"I did, sir."

"Well, d—n it! go on! What was it about? Did they talk of going off, or of love at all?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Evelyn made an impatient movement, as if he would strike her. She hastily added—

"But I judge the gentleman was coaxing Miss Evelyn to meet him again, and telling her he had some queer animal to show her, whose name I forget."

"You see——," said Vandeleur with a faint smile, to Mr. Evelyn.

"What do I see? I don't understand her."

"You see, it is still the same story: she has heard them speaking of *animal magnetism*."

"Yes, sir, that was just the name. Miss Evelyn seemed afraid of it, and yet to wish to see it: and, indeed, I thought it all only a cat's-paw to have another meeting. But, sir, what has happened to Mr. Herbert?"

"Go, go—that will do," said Mr. Evelyn, instinctively feeling, what poor Gertrude felt before, how utterly impossible it would be to convey any idea of the truth to her obtuse and unimaginative mind: indeed, he could scarcely be said to understand it himself; and although never, even at the frenzied moment of raising his hand to her, did he really suspect his innocent child of the crime of which she accused herself, yet the habitual injustice of preferring one of his children to the other, without the slightest reason, now came out in double force

when they were thus thrown into so dreadful a collision ; and in his heart, at that moment, he hoped he might never see his daughter more.

Here let us drop the veil. There are some states of feeling in which the sufferer dares not give the rein to his own imagination—nay, dare not boldly open his eyes on the whole reality, instinctively feeling that madness or death must ensue. Such was Vandeleur's present state. To lie powerless on a bed of sickness while his bride was borne away in the fangs of a monster whom he well knew how deeply she must by this time loathe, and to be obliged to leave to hirelings, whom he despatched in every direction for that purpose, the chance of rescuing her, might seem perhaps as great a trial as man could be subjected to : but, in addition, Vandeleur sometimes felt that deep and foul suspicion might, in the vulgar mind, attach itself to her sacred name.

In this, however, he gave himself unnecessary pain. Mrs. Sally Whitecross's penitential explanation, elicited by the steady good sense of

her husband, and her own good feeling, and made public under the same influences, turned the tide at once, completely, and for ever, in Gertrude's favour: albeit it was received by the multitude as they acknowledge the influence of the moon upon the tide of the waters;—they believed it as firmly, and understood it as little. The only difference was, that while they are, perhaps, vaguely disposed ultimately to refer the moon's influence to God, they certainly not more vaguely referred the Frenchman's to the devil.

These consolatory particulars, however, reached not Vandeleur in his sick-chamber, where he lay for many months a prisoner, and, during which time, not a trace had ever been found of the fugitives: and though Mr. Evelyn's first orders on this subject might have been lukewarm, it is almost unnecessary to say, that from the moment Vandeleur recovered his recollection, all that love, benevolence, and indignation united could suggest, was put in force

for Gertrude's recovery from the state of surpassing misery in which he knew she must be, if yet living. But all was alike in vain.

Lord and Lady Luscombe came to visit the afflicted family ; and she, dispensing with form on so trying an occasion, herself accompanied Mr. Evelyn to Vandeleur's chamber, to assure him of everything that he already knew, of Gertrude's purity and unswerving truth ; and that no one who saw them together, could for a moment have doubted of the nature of the count's claims to her attention. Indeed, her own last letter to Vandeleur from Paris, which only reached him a fortnight after her disappearance, recapitulating some of the strongest arguments in favour of animal magnetism, and, as was now evident, wishing to elicit his opinion and sentiments concerning it, removed the only feeling that had ever crossed his mind as even unaccountable in her conduct, viz. that of such profound secrecy of her feelings, and hopes, from him.

But the only circumstance which, during the course of his long and most ill-timed confinement, could have brought anything like real comfort to his mind, was the following letter from Mr. C., Herbert's physician, which Mr. Evelyn received about three weeks after the boy's death.

" MY DEAR SIR,

" Although in your affliction you have not thought of communicating to me the catastrophe which has befallen my interesting patient, your son ; still, as the sad affair has reached my ears through other channels, with some circumstances which must have rendered your bereavement particularly trying to your feelings, I cannot deny myself the satisfaction of writing to you on this subject, because I think I can afford you some comfort. I am informed that circumstances have led you to attribute your son's death to the interference and quackery of a stranger. Now, however much I condemn all

such unqualified tampering with health, I must on this occasion assure you that I do not think any human power could much have accelerated that melancholy event; and although whatever means were used, may have possibly caused it at that particular moment, it was only as it might have been caused by taking him up or down stairs—into the open air—or any other necessary exertion. This does not, of course, in the least acquit the person in intention; and I merely pledge myself to the fact, as I think it must bring some comfort to your mind, to show you by what a frail tenure his life was held from hour to hour, and how soon it must have been relinquished even with the tenderest care. You are aware I mentioned this in substance to you when I was last at your house. From the moment I perceived his recollection or intelligence occasionally returning, and his bodily strength proportionally sinking, I saw that we had nothing left on which to work. Of your other, and perhaps severer trial, I will not

.. speak, seeing that on that point I can afford
no relief, yet, feeling as I do that there has
been some unexplained mystery attending the
whole matter. With sincere condolence,

“ I remain,

“ My dear sir, &c.”

Will it be believed that this letter, so calculated to afford Vandeleur such peculiar comfort, not only with respect to his own feelings, but as being a balm for those of Gertrude when it could be communicated to her, which she would probably feel as almost indemnifying her for all she should have suffered ;—will it be believed that Mr. Evelyn withheld this letter from his knowledge ? It is almost impossible exactly to define his motives. He not only really and sincerely liked Vandeleur, and enjoyed his society, but was as much more enraged and disgusted with his unfortunate daughter even than he would otherwise have been, for having caused his present illness,—as if she would not have

saved every throb of his wounds by doubly painful ones in her own heart: yet, with the cruel injustice to which he had habitually yielded, he withheld from him what he knew would have afforded him relief, because he did not choose to be deprived of the right of blaming Gertrude for everything. Not that he acknowledged this motive to himself—far from it: on the contrary, he first threw the letter pettishly from him, saying he did not believe a word of it; that Mr. C. had always made a sort of pet of Gertrude, and, under pretence of clearing the stranger, meant it really to exculpate her: although in fact, in the mutilated edition of the story which had reached London, Mr. C. had never even heard Gertrude's name mentioned in connexion with her brother's death; and, in the latter paragraph of his letter, merely alluded to her elopement, as he was aware of her engagement with Vandeleur.

Mr. Evelyn next said to himself, he should show the letter to Vandeleur by-and-by. But,

in the mean time, a pretty little toy of Gertrude's stood on the table near him,—a sort of ornamented letter-box, which Vandeleur had sent to her from London for slipping his letters into, without the trouble of unlocking it each time she received one, as that was to be an event of such frequent occurrence. Mr. Evelyn now, either by design, or in a fit of absence, let the letter slip into this box. It of course was irrecoverable, as Gertrude had the key of it always hung about her neck. Poor thing! how often must she have sighed over it since! and how little did she guess the treasure it now secured,—one which she would have valued far beyond even the dear ones already there!

For an instant Mr. Evelyn almost blamed himself when he found he could not open the box without violence, which he did not feel himself authorised to use; but then he satisfied himself by saying that Vandeleur already acquitted Gertrude more than he thought she deserved, and that justice to all parties was best

preserved by leaving matters as they now stood. He forgot that it was the fear of the balance preponderating against himself, that made him so anxious for this left-handed justice, which is but too common to uneducated minds.

Another excuse too, and perhaps a more efficient one, may be offered for Mr. Evelyn's conduct on this occasion. His health, both of mind and body, had decidedly got what is expressively termed *a shake*. From the time of Herbert's first accident, he had almost entirely, and quite suddenly, abandoned his field-sports, and consequently almost all his exercise or occupation. His spirits flagged, and he had recourse to wine. He was naturally healthy and robust; this course of life was therefore precisely that most destructive to him. The effects first showed themselves in his temper: he became irritable, nervous, feverish; odd, unpleasant sensations in his head and stomach succeeded, and his spirits sank still lower. He drank more wine; the symptoms increased: but as his health was apparently still unimpaired

ed, and as he was one who, from seldom requiring one, laughed at doctors, he refused to attend to those symptoms.

Then came the final blow,—the loss of both his children however differently estimated—and the tedious illness of Major Vandeleur. He sank entirely beneath it—or rather beneath its influence on an uneducated mind which had no resources to turn to; and beneath deleterious habits which were suffered to become inveterate from the same cause—want of education,—that is, of mental discipline.

He now did little more than wander about the court in front of the house, dashing the pebbles about with the end of his stick; or sit in the drawing-room, to which Vandeleur was now able to be moved, murmuring lamentations and bitter execrations, which alike had lost their poignancy, if not their meaning, from constant reiteration.

At last, one day, Miss Wilson, who still vegetated in her old quarters unmolested, came

running into the drawing-room. She looked pale and frightened; for, strange to say, the poor creature had grown nervous under the fearful convulsions that had upset the family.

"What is the matter, for Heaven's sake, Miss Wilson?" exclaimed Vandeleur, starting up from the sofa where he was reclining. "Any news?"

"Oh no, sir, none that you mean. But Mr. Evelyn, sir, looks very queer."

"What on earth do you mean?" (for her looks could not be trifled with.) "Where is he?"

"Sir, he is sitting on the parlour-window stool, leaning up in the corner, and his eyes and mouth all wrong."

Vandeleur hurried out as fast as he was able; and there indeed he found his unhappy friend in an alarming state. He had been suddenly seized with a fit, and although medical attendance was instantly procured, he never spoke again. He seemed to retain life for two days; but at the end of that time he was no more,

and was laid beside his son in the vault of the family.

When Mr. Evelyn's sudden death took place, Vandeleur found himself in a very disagreeable and troublesome situation. Mr. Evelyn had few relations, and of those few none were residing in the same part of the country with himself. His nearest and almost only acknowledged relative was a nephew, the only son of his only brother; a youth for whom, on the death of his spendthrift father, Mr. Evelyn had purchased a commission, and who had gone with his regiment to India. Vandeleur was perfectly aware of the general state of Mr. Evelyn's pecuniary affairs; for, besides that the latter had not the strange and unamiable foible of keeping them concealed as closely as if he feared a robber in every friend, the late circumstance of his intended connexion with the family had put him fully in possession of every particular. He knew that Gertrude was now sole heiress to her father; and, from Mr. Evelyn's

habits, he thought it very probable he had made no will. At all events, under every consideration, he felt that he himself was the person most fitted to act as executor. Yet, wishing to have some one present while he examined the papers and desks of his late friend, he wrote to beg of Lord Foxhill, who, he knew, was one of Mr. Evelyn's most intimate companions, to do that good office for him. He came immediately; and in their search they found, contrary to their expectations, a will, made soon after Herbert's accident, when probably Mr. Evelyn had thought seriously for the first time in his life.

The will contained little more than a few trifling legacies; but it was particularly satisfactory to Vandeleur's feelings, both with respect to the past and future, as it appointed him and Lord Foxhill joint trustees and executors: and as they both felt conscious that the latter was merely named as being always on the spot, while Vandeleur was likely to be wandering about, their first step together was to put matters into

such a train, as, while it should admit of a long and indefinite absence on the part of Vandeleur, without Gertrude's interest suffering thereby, should at the same time spare all unnecessary trouble to his old colleague.

From the first moment that Vandeleur had seen reason to hope for his own final recovery, he had formed a resolution, that as soon as he should be able to endure travelling, he would set out, and in person institute such a search after Gertrude, as, if her destroyer should be able to elude, would indeed prove him the demon that some already believed him to be. From this determination there was nothing now to deter him. His mother had long been weaned from depending on his society for her happiness, and still resided almost entirely with the Duchess of Castleton. He therefore resolved at once upon disposing of his commission ; for, besides that his health was still far from being perfectly restored, he knew that the duties of his profession would immeasurably interfere with the unlimited search he meditated.

Of the disadvantage to himself attending his abandoning a profession in which he had so far succeeded, even beyond his own most sanguine hopes, he thought not for a moment. The image ever before his eyes, was that of his innocent, beautiful, loving, and beloved Gertrude, delivered up entirely into the power of a monster, who had not hesitated to employ such means for her destruction. He knew her ardent character too well not to feel in his own soul, and through every nerve, how deep and dreadful must be her abhorrence of him in whose power she was; and he sometimes was driven to hope, and to believe, that death must have ere now delivered her from such surpassing misery. With such thoughts ever present to his mind, what were his own worldly advantages or prospects to him!—less than nothing. He felt that his interest in them was gone for ever, with her who was to have shared them, and that to resign them now in her service was the last ray of comfort he could ever derive from them.

He hurried to London ; and so determined was he upon his search being made with a minuteness that must baffle all ingenuity of concealment, that while the arrangements for the disposal of his commission were going on, he had every means put in requisition to seek for the fugitives even there. But it was in vain ; and in vain was it likewise that he caused the offices whence passports are issued, to be examined : there was no record of any such names as De l'Espoir or De Brons to be met with.

His next visit was to Paris ; but there he was equally unsuccessful. The Count de l'Espoir had indeed left Paris at the time that corresponded with his appearance in England—this he knew too well—but of his return no one had ever heard.

Being fully aware that Gertrude's fortune must have been far more the object of the villainous pursuit, than the reluctant hand of a creature so unsuited to him in every way, Vandeleur drew up an article, which he caused to be

inserted in the public prints of every part of Europe, mentioning the event of Mr. Evelyn's death, and the circumstance of his daughter being now sole heiress to his splendid fortune, hoping thereby to elicit some intelligence respecting her. But although he gave references and addresses to every capital town, and even to many others, of the Continent, and spared neither time, fatigue, nor expense, by which he could have a chance of lighting on a trace of those he was seeking, total mystery and silence still enveloped them, until at last he began to think that both must have perished together.

He shuddered at the thought of how? or where? or when? or why? The probable answer to each was alike dreadful. And yet, if she still lived, was her fate much better?

CHAPTER XVI.

This cold and creeping kinsman, who so long
Kept his eye on me as the snake upon
The fluttering bird, hath ere this time o'erstept me—
Become the master of my rights, and lord
Of that which lifts him up to princes in
Dominion and domain. WERNER.

It was after a continued and unwearied search of several months, during which time he had visited more cities, wandered through more inhabited solitudes, and plunged into more places of public and private amusement, and general resort, than probably the merest votary of pleasure, or searcher after variety, had ever done in the same space of time, that one evening, heartless and dispirited, he flung himself upon a sofa in his hotel at Brussels, whither the circle

of his wanderings had brought him on his return homewards.

“A letter from England, sir,” said his servant Whitecross, who still accompanied him.

“Why did I not get it earlier?” he exclaimed languidly,—“when the English post came in?”

“It came in the ambassador’s bag, sir; which was the cause of the delay.”

Vandeleur took the letter. He did not immediately recognise the handwriting; but, on opening, he found it was a scrawl from old Lord Foxhill. But, heavens! what were the news that scrawl contained!

Since Vandeleur’s absence from England, Lord Luscombe had been appointed Secretary for Foreign Affairs; and Lord Foxhill’s letter was to inform Vandeleur, that he had just received a letter from his daughter, Lady Luscombe, informing him that Mr. George Evelyn, the next heir to the property of Beauton, and who was just returned from India, had applied

for a warrant to be issued from the secretary's office for the apprehension of Gertrude and her accomplice, accused of the murder of Herbert Evelyn. Lady Luscombe, with all the activity of friendship, on hearing of this, wrote off to her father, who, she was aware, always knew where to direct to Vandeleur, and entreated of him not to lose a post in despatching a letter to him with the frightful intelligence.

It is absolutely impossible to convey any idea of Vandeleur's feelings on reading this letter. That vague and unpleasant surmises might be formed concerning Gertrude's disappearance, by those who only knew the worst of human nature, and who had never known her, to correct their vile imaginings by, he was well aware: but that there lived a human being whose interest or inclination it could be to fix the stain upon her spotless purity, and then hold it up to public view for the finger of scorn to point at, had never even entered into his imagination.

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When, upon the death of Mr. Evelyn, he ran over in his mind the few relatives of whom he had ever heard him speak, he thought of Mr. George Evelyn amongst the rest, solely from an accidental mention of him upon one occasion ; when, the conversation turning on the purchase of commissions, Mr. Evelyn mentioned his having bought an ensigncy for this young man. The circumstance of his being in the entail never entered into the contemplation of any one, probably not even of himself, for Herbert and Gertrude seemed even peculiarly formed for health and happiness, until the death of the one, and the mysterious disappearance of the other, seemed literally to throw the ball at his foot. His mother immediately wrote the news to him, and advised him to return. He did so ; and from all the particulars he could collect, without exciting suspicion of his intentions, he succeeded in persuading himself that Gertrude herself was no more, and that De l'Espoir, having no legal proof of their marriage to produce, had determined

never to make any claim even on her personal fortune. However, as Mr. Evelyn was aware that, while this was mere conjecture, the trustees could not be expected to resign their trust in his favour, he resolved upon bringing the matter to a crisis at once, by instituting the prosecution against his unfortunate kinswoman and her accomplice ; soothing whatever compunctious visitings might occasionally assail him, with the reflection, that if Gertrude were innocent, her innocence would appear—and if guilty—why she deserved her fate.

Vandeleur ran over Lord Foxhill's letter again and again, in hopes each time of extracting some comfort from it; but it was all in vain. Lord Luscombe was obliged to issue the warrant; and, turn the matter in what light he could, he saw nothing but additional misery and disgrace impending over the lovely young creature whom he had taken to his bosom, with feelings which partook of those of the tender parent, as well as of the impassioned lover.

Acquittal ! what a word to be coupled with her name ! and acquitted of what ? Why, the very accusation would prove her death.

Yet, that he must be the one to seek and make her aware of that accusation, was the first feeling that he knew to be reality, where for some time all had appeared a frightful dream. Yes, he must seek her out if she still existed, and find what was the most prudent course now left her to pursue, even if his own heart's blood must distil drop by drop in the undertaking. But where to turn to next ?

There was but one capital town of any consideration which he had yet left unexplored,—and that perhaps as much from the improbability of their having gone thither, as from feelings of another kind, which made him prefer writing and sending agents thither, to presenting himself on such a quest to the English ambassador who at that moment resided at St. Petersburg. When this frightful letter reached him, however, and when he considered the minuteness of his former

search, and the hopelessness of going over the same ground again ; and when he recollected that the very circumstance of his supposing St. Petersburg out of the question, might cause it to be selected by De l'Espoir, as it was evident he chose for some reason to lie *perdu*, he determined that no selfish feelings of mortification, or of any other kind whatsoever, should, even for an hour longer, operate to detain him from this last and remote chance of finding her, and doing all in his power to smooth a path which it pleased Heaven to make so rugged for her.

Accordingly, within an hour after he received Lord Foxhill's letter, he was *en route* once more ; and scarcely allowing himself time for rest or food, he arrived in the capital of Russia in the shortest possible time.

It is the custom in that city for persons of all ranks and conditions, even strangers who are only residing there for a short time, to put their names on some conspicuous part of the outside of their houses or lodgings. Although Vande-

leur had not a hope that De l'Espoir would comply with this custom, except by giving a false name, still, in the feverish state of his anxiety, the first evening of his arrival found him traversing the streets, and examining the houses as he passed, with an intensity of curiosity which called forth many a gratified smile from the inhabitants. They little guessed how insensible his eye remained to every part of their gorgeous architecture, except the one little compartment on which it rested.

As he was thus hurrying along, and endeavouring to form in his mind some plan for his proceedings the next day, which might afford him any chance of ascertaining whether, or not, the persons he sought had been heard of there, he observed an immense concourse of persons flocking to one particular building, and entering it promiscuously. He inquired of his guide the meaning of it, and was informed that the building was a theatre, and that on that evening was to be performed a new tragedy,

which the Emperor had commanded, and at which he, and the rest of the imperial family, were expected to appear.

Vandeleur had made it a rule to peep into every place of public resort, wherever he wandered; deeming it very probable that, whatever might be the state of the miserable Gertrude, her villanous destroyer would not entirely seclude himself from pleasure and amusement, however he might deem it necessary to conceal his name and character. In pursuance of this plan, Vandeleur now resolved upon joining the crowd, taking his place in the theatre, and remaining there as long as he observed people continue to flock in. He had not the most distant hope of meeting Gertrude in any place of the kind; fearing, but too acutely, that such would be far from congenial to the state her feelings must be in. "But, O that I could meet him!" he exclaimed; and his dark eyes assumed an expression of fierceness very foreign to their natural animated, but joyous and benevolent one; and

his cheek became flushed with a colour that had for many months been a stranger to it. Vandeleur had but partially recovered from his severe wound when he set out a pilgrim in Gertrude's cause, and the excited and feverish state of his mind and feelings since that period, had considerably altered his appearance. He had lost the look of vigorous health and activity that formerly distinguished him; he was languid, pale, and emaciated; and the bright and playful smile, which was formerly the chief point of attraction in his countenance, had now totally disappeared, and was replaced by a severe compression of the mouth, that gave to even casual observers the idea of a mind stretched on some painful subject beyond calm or patient endurance.

His fine temper still remained unimpaired: it seemed as if his griefs were too much apart from every one, and every thing else, to exercise the slightest influence towards them; and his faithful Whitecross not unfrequently swept a tear from his own eye, when, as he waited on his

master, he observed by his gloomy silence, and sometimes an involuntary gesture of despair, how deep his sufferings were, while he continued gentle and kind to those about him.

On entering the theatre, the spectacle that met Vandeleur's eye was noble and imposing. The imperial family of Russia were remarkable for the beauty of their appearance, and the fine and commanding air which is so essential to royalty; unless, indeed, where the want of it is supplied by a mind so commanding, so exalted in itself, that it seizes those of others captive, and draws them after it above all minor considerations. But this is not often to be seen; perhaps it is not desirable that it should be.

If the Russian ladies in general want the exquisite polish and refinement in which those of England perhaps surpass all others, they still possess a degree of beauty, both of feature and form, which renders them far from uninteresting: and as this occasion was considered quite a fête, Vandeleur happened to see them to the best

possible advantage. But what was loveliness or brilliancy to him? He sought the blighted and the broken-hearted; and his eye ran as coldly, though as inquiringly, over the beauty of the faces that surrounded him, as it had already done over their abodes.

It was also as much in vain. He saw men and women of all ages, and of all grades, and apparently of all countries, that one usually meets with; but nowhere did he see the features which he sought.

He waited until the play was nearly half over, and was then about to leave the theatre in despair, when, on changing his position for that purpose, his attention was arrested by a tall dark figure in a distant box. He held his breath, and strained his eyes, in order to obtain a clearer view; but, as if the person was aware of his intention, he perceived him stoop, as in the act of addressing some one who sat behind him, and continue in that leaning position. Vandeleur kept his eyes fixed, with a determi-

nation at least to weary him, if indeed he purposely chose that attitude for concealment. In the mean time the tragedy deepened ; a death scene ensued, and the house was breathless in emotion. The actor was a powerful one, and addressed himself to the feelings of all. Subject, performance, and incident would, however, all alike have been lost on Vandeleur, but that just at the moment of the death, which happened to be that of a young man, an only son and brother, he observed a sudden bustle and confusion in the box on which he had previously fixed his eyes. Every one who occupied it had stood up, and Vandeleur could now distinctly see that they were carrying out a lady who had fainted.

To one whose whole soul is concentrated on one particular object, almost everything in nature will appear to bear some reference to it; just as the eye, after gazing long and fixedly at anything, will for some moments see its image reflected upon everything else it looks

at. A circumstance which at another moment would not have cost Vandeleur a thought, now struck upon his heart almost with the force of conviction. The circumstance was merely that the lady, whoever she might be, had sat at the back of the box, though only gentlemen occupied the front, and had contrived to conceal herself so completely as to elude even his intended scrutiny. It was sufficient to cause him to rush from his own place, and, by contriving to meet the party in the lobby, to ascertain if his palpitating presentiment was correct.

It was.

In the wan, wasted, and now death-like form and countenance he encountered, encircled in the arms of strange and foreign-looking men, he recognised, at a glance, his own loved and long-lost Gertrude. The lobby was rather obscurely lighted; but the fiery gleam that darted from Vandeleur's eyes, as he sought De l'Espoir amongst those who surrounded her, seemed as if, of itself, it would have illu-

minated it, at least sufficiently to discover the object of his fury. He was not, however, amongst them.

Could Vandeleur, then, have been mistaken in the figure which had first attracted his attention to that box? And if so, should it be a subject of rejoicing or lamentation to him?

He had not long time to consider; for the moment that the fresh current of air from the entrance rushed in upon Gertrude, she yielded to its influence, and revived. She opened her eyes, and looked in astonishment around her. They caught in an instant the form of Vandeleur hurrying in agitation towards her. Her first involuntary impulse, while her senses had as yet perhaps but imperfectly returned, was to utter a rapturous exclamation, and stretch her arms towards him: but, as if the act itself, or his rush forward to receive her, had the effect of fully reawakening her, she suddenly started back into the arms of the gentlemen who supported

her, and uttering a fearful and prolonged scream of despair, buried her face in her shawl, and made a movement with her hand to hurry forwards. Vandeleur stopped, as if he had received a death-blow, on the instant.

There are some feelings which, when deliberately read or written, seem to be the result of reasoning, and therefore to require time in their experience ; while in reality they are but nature's instinct, and flash through the brain or heart in less time than we can calculate.

When Gertrude first stretched out her arms to Vandeleur, with the look and tone of joyful recognition, he felt as if there was still hope—still some explanation, however improbable, by which she might yet be his. But when he saw her start back—when he saw the rush of sudden agony over her countenance—and when he heard that shriek of despair, he knew, but too surely, that all was lost ! Under this conviction, he hesitated for a moment whether or not to address her, so paralysed, so over-

powered did he feel. It was, however, but for a moment he could hesitate. He stifled his own agonising feelings, and remembering the importance of the communication he had to make, he determined to forget himself, except in as far as he could be of use in softening the cruel hardships of her almost unprecedented fate. In this spirit he advanced and took her hand, for the gentlemen stood irresolute during so strange a scene. Her face was still buried in the folds of her dress; but it was evident she knew who touched her, for she trembled violently, and, without looking up, she made an effort to release her hand.

Vandeleur endeavoured to compose himself sufficiently to speak; but ere he could command words, De l'Espoir himself appeared. He had only run forwards to order a conveyance, and now returned to carry Gertrude into it. He instantly recognised Vandeleur, and, without betraying the slightest astonishment or confusion, took off his hat, not only with that

coolness which a man may well assume who has succeeded over another to his utmost satisfaction, but with the perfect politeness and expressive civility of a Frenchman. Vandeleur instinctively returned the salutation, but, it must be confessed, with a very different grace ; for it was evident to all, that the honest brow of the Englishman grew darker, as if to indemnify himself for the forced concession ; and turning abruptly again to Gertrude, he said in a tone of deep decision, " I must speak with you instantly."

Gertrude, who, though her face was still covered, had caught the sound of De l'Espoir's foot returning, now looked up, and cast towards him a look of terror, and evidently habitual inquiry of his will.

He did not answer to her speaking glance ; but calling one of the gentlemen aside, gave him such an explanation of the scene as he thought sufficient, at once to account for it, and to cause them to disperse. They did so accordingly,

with many bows and expressions of regret; and De l'Espoir, taking the support of Gertrude now on himself, turned once more to Vandeleur, and, in a tone and with a dignity which might have suited well with a better cause, said, "Major Vandeleur, I can be at no loss to imagine how bitter your feelings must be towards me; and, as far as it is in my power, I should be most happy to soothe them.—Nay, hear me out.—For some part of the cause of those feelings (and he glanced at Gertrude) I cannot, nor can you expect that I should, apologise: for others, they only require patient investigation to clear me; and for your own wound, I assure you, upon my honour, it was accidental.—Nay, permit me.—I am aware of Mr. Evelyn's death, and that you are his executor. I will hope that, as a man of sense, you have come hither to seek us only in that character, and as such,—nay, (let me add, in both our names,) as an old friend of both, the Countess de l'Espoir and myself will be most happy to receive you." He again

took off his hat as if to acknowledge Vandeleur in this new character of old friend.

During the earlier parts of this speech, Vandeleur had frequently made indignant attempts to interrupt and contradict him; but still kept in bounds by his cool politeness, and his own wish to learn all that it so much imported him to know, he determined to hear him to an end, and then judge how he was to act. But when that end did come, every other feeling—ay, even of indignation and disgust—was absorbed in the one fearful idea of Gertrude's actually being the Countess de l'Espoir. He changed colour violently, and hastily turning his eyes towards her, glared upon her with a look that would have terrified her, had hers not been immovably fixed upon the ground. But who could look on that faded, shrinking form, and feel aught but the deepest and most heartfelt compassion! His countenance relaxed in a moment from its wild expression, very nearly resembling reproach, and stepping quiet-

ly toward her, he took her hand, even as she leaned on De l'Espoir's arm, and in a deep hollow voice, which spoke at once the sorrow and the pity of his soul, he asked—"Gertrude, are you married?"

She raised her eyes to his with one lightning glance. It was enough:—the most vivid flash that ever broke from out the heavens on the darkest night, never served more clearly to show to the shipwrecked mariner the ruin and the desolation, the wide and hopeless gulf that yawned around him on every side, far as the eye could reach, than did that glance tell to Vandeleur that all his earthly hopes were at an end. All she had felt for him, all she had suffered since, and all that she was aware he would feel at the intelligence, were mingled in that glance—and it did not signify that the words "I am" died inaudibly upon her lips.

What is the nature of hope? Is it sometimes so palpable as to constitute the chief support of our existence?—sometimes so subtile as

to elude our own consciousness? Few will, perhaps, be disposed to deny the first : and if the second be less sure, whence is that patient acquiescence under the privation of that we most desire, until we even persuade ourselves we have ceased to wish for it ;—yet, if a moment arrive when some physical or moral impossibility intervenes between us and the object of our desire, which it is no longer in fate to overcome, we at once experience a contraction, a convulsion, a tension, as it were, of the brain, and stagnation of the heart, as violent and as painful as if we had never until then contemplated the possibility of our disappointment ?

Such were the sensations experienced by Godfrey Vandeleur for one dreadful moment when Gertrude Evelyn confessed herself a wife. Had he been asked, or had he asked himself, in what other situation than that of De l'Espoir's wife, he could have hoped, or even wished, to find her, he must have acknowledged that his present feelings were not founded in reason. Yet so it was,

that when he saw his young, and beautiful, and loving bride, actually the wife of another man, and so, out of his reach for ever, he felt stunned, as if the gentle and momentary look that had acknowledged this, had indeed been one of lightning, which had blasted him in its glance.

He continued to gaze upon her for a moment longer, as if to take a farewell view of her as his own, and to recognise her as the property of another—and that other the Count de l'Espoir ; then stifling a heavy groan, in the calmest voice he could assume, but whose tones were still deeply mournful, he said, "Even so—even so, Madame De l'Espoir ! I must speak with you immediately and privately."

Gertrude did not again raise her eyes to her husband ; but her whole air and attitude spoke in silent but eloquent language, that from him, and not from her, the answer to this request must come.

Vandeleur's heart bled within him. The gay, the happy, the playful, idolized Gertrude,

thus in a few short months so completely subdued to the tyrannical will of a cruel and unprincipled stranger, who had defrauded her of herself! And, now he clearly read the story of that wasted and attenuated form, and that faded cheek.—His feelings were becoming uncontrollable.

“Gertrude,” said he, seizing her arm with a grasp that seemed to have less of tenderness than determination, — “Gertrude, this is all madness! I must speak with you yourself, and that instantly:” and he would have dragged her forwards, though she clung wildly to her husband’s arm, but that he, politely interposing, intimated how deeply he must be concerned in all that concerned her, and invited Major Vandeleur to take a seat in their carriage and accompany them to their house.

Vandeleur was absolutely disconcerted by his coolness; and the more so, as poor Gertrude’s feeble resistance, when he would have dragged her forwards, showed him that the count had

her obedience at least on his side. He felt then how ridiculous, as well as useless, would be any violence on his part ; and suddenly making an effort over himself, as he looked on Gertrude's shrinking and shuddering form, and saw the company now beginning to flock out to where the party stood, he hastily intimated his acceptance of De l'Espoir's offer ; but with a manner intended to convey to him that he only accepted it in order, thereby, to procure for himself the opportunity he desired, of learning all he required to know, and then acting upon that knowledge. It did not suit De l'Espoir's purpose to understand this silent, and therefore doubtful language ; and affecting to take his acceptance in all courtesy, they proceeded down stairs.

"Gertrude, take Major Vandeleur's arm," said De l'Espoir ; "you are not able to support yourself." But Gertrude, muttering something unintelligibly, declined this permission.

The few moments that separated them whilst proceeding to the carriage, enabled Vandeleur

in some degree to collect his ideas and spirits from the confusion and hurry into which they had been thrown. He asked himself, now that he had found those he had sought so eagerly, what object he had in view. Was it a gratification of his own desire for revenge? or was it an anxiety to serve the ill-starred Gertrude in any manner that might yet be possible? Surely it was the latter; and he would have considered himself cruelly selfish to have sacrificed the chance of that possibility to any other feeling. Viewing the matter in this light, he saw that to take the punishment of De l'Espoir into his own hands would be madness; for what could ensue from such a mode of proceeding, but ridicule and calumny, and an attraction of the public attention to Gertrude's sad story, which, at the present juncture, and in a foreign country, with only her former lover for her protector and advocate, might prove fatal alike to her fame and life. In order, however, to ascertain how he might render her the service he desired, it was

necessary that he should have a private interview with herself, lest, from his being still in total ignorance of all the springs and counter-springs of the overwhelming circumstances that had taken place, he should, in attempting her rescue, either militate against her own wishes, or plunge her into deeper destruction. To obtain this interview, enough had already passed to show him that he must conciliate the count.

Nothing could be more abhorrent to the noble soul of Vandeleur, than anything like treachery or deceit; but when he considered whose life and reputation were at stake, and by what villainous means they had been placed in jeopardy, he could not refuse to impose upon himself the task of suppressing his indignation for the moment, and, by accepting De l'Espoir's offered civility, avail himself of the only means in his power to find out how matters really stood. He had been deeply penetrated—heart-struck by Gertrude's clinging to that stranger's arm to protect herself from him: but though this cir-

cumstance served the more fully to convince him of the impropriety and impolicy of any violent measures on his part, and though her whole air and appearance spoke of subdued and rigorous observance of duty, yet not for a moment, even to his agitated and searching scrutiny, did it betray one softer feeling towards him whom she clung to as her husband ; and Vandeleur felt that from her own ingenuous lips alone, could he hope to learn what plan would be safe or advisable for him to pursue at this fearful crisis. At present he saw not how this was to be obtained ; but, as a step towards it, he accepted De l'Espoir's offer of a seat in his carriage, and in the course of their drive suffered him to converse as if no deadly feud was between them ; and while affording him such information as he required upon the subject of the property that, by her father's death, devolved on Gertrude, he kept clear of all mention of the suit instituted against them by the heir-at-law.

How far De l'Espoir was in reality deceived by this apparent quiescence of Vandeleur, cannot be precisely known ; but it was evident he chose to accept it as sincere ; and although upon arriving at the hotel which he inhabited, he did not repeat his invitation to Vandeleur to enter, but, on the contrary, apologised for omitting to do so by the lateness of the hour, yet he begged the favour of a visit from him next morning, in order to enter more fully upon the business of the property to which the latter was executor.

Never in the course of Vandeleur's existence did he labour under such a feeling of oppression—of suffocation from suppressed emotion of various kinds, as when, on promising to comply with De l'Espoir's request, he coldly bade good-night to Gertrude, and stepped from the carriage to pursue his way homewards. He gasped, and gulped the air even audibly ; set his teeth, and clenched and opened his hands. It was not from anger, grief, or amazement : it

was merely an effort of nature to relieve him by bodily exertion from the excruciating moral restraint he had laboured under for the last half-hour.

During the drive from the theatre, Gertrude had sat back in one corner of the carriage, perfectly still and silent. She had wrapped her face in her veil from the first moment, and she never uncovered it until Vandeleur left them. No sigh, no groan escaped her ; but in one of the furtive glances which Vandeleur ventured to dart towards her, as a pale, lonely, lamp threw its sickly ray into their carriage, he thought he perceived the black gauze pressed more closely to her face, and it seemed to have become dense and humid. The sight of this had probably contributed to his keen agony of emotion ; but it would be doing him the grossest injustice to attribute it all to that circumstance. In fact, the human heart is not capable of harbouring at the same time more than a certain quantity of different feelings, if we may

use the expression: one may fill it even to bursting, but a thousand can do no more, and must each be diminished in proportion to the variety. No man ever loved a woman more fondly, more entirely, more devotedly, than did Vandeleur his young bride, without one alloying circumstance or feeling. But when she was snatched from his arms, and, when he found her again, the wife of another man, indignation against her betrayer and the murderer of her brother, as he believed him to be, together with the overwhelming anxiety he felt for the fate that was now impending over her, necessarily produced the effect of keeping passion in the background for the present; and in hoping to see expiated the death of Herbert, by that of his slayer, and so freeing Gertrude from her thralldom, not a selfish feeling or unholy wish had one moment's existence in his breast. Indeed, had he contemplated such a termination, he must have seen that the hand that delivered over her husband to die the death, could

never again in common decency be clasped in hers : but he did not think of this, for this termination was not his object. But, though the sun of passion had sunk for the present beneath the billows of anxiety and despair, the pure and chastened beam that still hovered around Gertrude, showed that it had only yielded to the influence of the barriers that were interposed between her and its radiance, but still preserved its own existence.

I do not take occasion here to speak of Vandeleur's principles, moral or religious ; for though we may trust they would have had their weight, and influence, in subduing every wish that the forced change in his circumstances now rendered criminal, yet I do not seek to attribute to them, what, in fact, was owing to the causes I have already mentioned ; and, without anything more than this, he now devoted his energies and his life to Gertrude's service, with feelings that, at the present moment, might have become a brother.

Upon reaching his own hotel he flung himself into a chair, and after an hour or two spent in, or rather yielded up to, vague want of thought, he began to deem it time to make an effort to compose himself, collect his ideas, and endeavour to form some plan likely to bring about the desired interview. He could scarcely tell whether he was most glad or sorry to feel, or to imagine, that he had not deceived De l'Espoir into any real confidence in him; for, though it left him no grounds on which to build for a private opportunity of addressing Gertrude in the next morning's visit, there was something consolatory to his feelings in not having acted his part too well. Yet again he blamed himself for this, when he recollected how time was passing; and that while he was thus coquetting with his own pride or principles, the fatal warrant might arrive to arrest Gertrude.

After a night spent without even an attempt at courting sleep, he came to the determination of writing a note to her, beseeching her, in such

terms as she could not feel justified in refusing, to strike out some plan for granting him an immediate interview, and of trusting to chance or circumstance for being able to convey this note to her in the course of the projected visit. The more obvious mode of committing it either to the post, or to the care of a servant, he at once rejected, as being perhaps fraught with a degree of danger to her, the extent of which he had no means of estimating, and had but too much reason to fear might be extreme. Indeed, every circumstance attending this transaction, served to mark more and more emphatically, that the fewer were the persons concerned in its accomplishment, the surer would be its success.

At the appointed hour he set out upon his promised visit, and was received by De l'Espoir alone.

He inquired for Gertrude: the reply was slight, but sufficient to show Vandeleur that he was not to expect to see her that morning. This, he determined, must be amended; and ac-

cordingly, in the course of the information he afforded De l'Espoir on the matters of business between them, he contrived, with some adroitness, to make it appear that Gertrude's presence was essentially necessary to confirm or elucidate some points at issue.

De l'Espoir despatched a servant to require her to appear ; but it was a considerable time before the order was obeyed. De l'Espoir sent again, and in a more peremptory tone. She came at last—and Vandeleur was astonished to perceive that she still wore the black gauze veil of the evening before. Apparently De l'Espoir was astonished also ; for he immediately exclaimed, “ My dear ! why, then, are you veiled ? ”

“ My eyes are exceedingly weak, and I cannot bear the light to-day,” she said timidly, as she placed herself, with only a slight inclination of her head towards Vandeleur, with her face turned from it.

But no manœuvre could conceal from the

anxious eyes of her devoted friend that hers were red and swollen with recent weeping. His heart fluttered in his bosom, seemed to rise to his throat, and it was with an effort he prevented the tremor of his frame from becoming visible. Why had she been weeping at that especial hour? and why was she so anxious to conceal the fact? Was it from him or from her husband that she wished to conceal it? Had she known that he was in the house? and had she remembered the time when she would not have been exiled from his presence?

De l'Espoir abruptly resumed the conversation; Vandeleur endeavoured to follow him—but, in spite of all his efforts, an additional degree of coldness, and almost disgust, was apparent in his manner; while Gertrude sat apart, cold and motionless, like one dead to every subject that has interest for others in this life. When appealed to, she either bent her head in acquiescence, or gave a reply, when necessary, in the shortest form and lowest possible tone.

Vandeleur could not in such tones recognise, in the least, the joyous ones whose notes of gladness used to call out an echo wherever they were heard. He suffered the conversation to drag on some time longer, when, seeing no chance of accomplishing his purpose, but, on the contrary, fearing every moment that De l'Espoir would dismiss his unhappy wife with the intimation that her presence was no longer necessary, he slowly rose to take his leave ; and then casting his eyes, apparently in curiosity, round the foreign reception-room, but in reality in the forlorn hope of seeing some safe hiding-place for his billet, he spied a work-box of Gertrude's on a distant table.

" An English work-box, I protest ! " he exclaimed : and advancing towards it in well-feigned enthusiasm,—although, had it been of foreign manufacture, it would have served his purpose equally,—he took it up, and inquired how it had found its way so far.

De l'Espoir, to his great annoyance, fol-

lowed him to the table, and answered, " Oh ! why madame has a kind of liking for England still, and purchased this box from a poor woman who had it to dispose of."

" Well, you will admit, count," said Vandeleur, " that even in such trifles as these,—I beg pardon," he said, half-playfully turning to Gertrude, as he still held the box in one hand, while he took up its cushions and trinkets with the other,—“ but even here, I think you will acknowledge that if we fail in *prettiness*, we excel in all that is useful and substantial. Even in this box, now, here is an air of *comfort*, if I may use the expression ; and that, you know, is a quality which we boast as peculiarly English."

" Why, amen, and so be it," said De l'Espoir. " I'm sure we do not grudge comfort to those who require it so much : for us, we can well dispense with it for the sake of joy. But it is not *my* part to speak against England," he added, politely bowing.

Vandeleur felt no inclination to pursue the

subject, and returned his bow with one of farewell. De l'Espoir accompanied him down-stairs ; and whether it was that Vandeleur, in the instant he had turned to beg Gertrude's pardon for ranking a lady's work-box amongst the trifles of the earth, had contrived to convey to her by a look that he had deposited a note ; or whether innate perception of his every movement, and sympathy with his every feeling, had told her that the exaggerated interest he manifested at the sight of a common work-box of a country he had just left, as she supposed, and was free to return to, could only be to conceal some other interest,—it matters not to inquire ; since the effect was, in either case, precisely the same ; namely, to cause her, the moment their receding steps convinced her she was safe, to spring from her chair to that distant table—raise the cushion of the box—seize from beneath its silky softness the hidden billet—hastily transplant it to the concealment of her reti-

cule, and return to her chair as if she had never moved from it.

Alas! alas! for the fate that could have taught caution even to ingenuousness itself!

It was no premeditation of deceit; it was the mere instinct of nature, when placed in a position to require it. Probably, had there been time for reflection, she would in her scrupulousness have spurned at the impulse, as unbecoming her situation as De l'Espoir's wife: but, fortunately for her, she had not the time, and thus escaped the impropriety of determined deception; while she was spared all that would have ensued from the note falling into the hands of De l'Espoir. It soon appeared, however, that whatever means Vandeleur had adopted to communicate the secret to her, suspicion had done as much for him. For, no sooner did he see Vandeleur out of the house, than, bounding up the stairs again, with strides that passed over several at each step, he proceeded direct to the table on

which stood the eventful box ; and first deliberately raising the cushion, then each trinket he had seen Vandeleur touch, he finally turned the box upside down, and emptied the contents upon the table.

The search was of course fruitless ; and for a moment he seemed ashamed of himself, and endeavoured hastily to replace them. Finding it not an easy task, however, he turned to Gertrude, and said, "See, my dear, I have disarranged this box, that has met with such admiration ; you can settle it again. For my part I see nothing to admire so much in it—do you ? or *did you ?*" he said emphatically, and fixing his eyes upon her.

"You are fully aware of the feelings that induced me to purchase it," she said with a sigh : "admiration was the last feeling I thought of."

"Hah ! what other ? *love* perhaps ?" he said, rather in reference to his own meaning, than to her answer.

She continued steadily: "Yes; love to my country, love to all that belongs to it."

De l'Espoir's eyes scowled for a moment: but he had reasons for not wishing to quarrel with Gertrude just then; so he subdued whatever he might have felt, and, with that self-command of which he was eminently master, he said, "Well, my dear, I shall no longer feel jealous of your love to England. I trust we shall very soon visit, if not reside there. In the mean time, I am sorry that I am obliged to leave you for the rest of this day. I fear I cannot return before night, as I am going into the country with our friend Dumoulin; but I hope you will be able to amuse yourself in the mean time."

"Oh! certainly," said Gertrude. "Are you quite sure you will not return before night?"

"Quite sure. But why do you ask?"

"Merely," said Gertrude, "as in that case I shall not expect you to dinner."

And it was the simple truth. But how differ-

ently did the dark mind of De l'Espoir interpret it! "No, I cannot be back before quite night; so, adieu!" he repeated, and departed, apparently perfectly satisfied.

Scarcely did De l'Espoir himself ascend the stairs, in search of the suspected note, with more rapid flight, than did Gertrude now, to gain the privacy of her own chamber, and devour its contents. But here all similitude between them ended. No sooner did Gertrude feel herself free from the sickening and exasperating presence of her loathed betrayer, and tyrant husband, than her feelings subsided into their natural gentle and feminine channel; and when she proceeded to draw the billet from her reticule, and her eye dwelt, for the first time for so long a period, upon the well-known characters traced by that beloved hand, and saw the impression of his cipher seal, she found such feelings revive within her breast as caused her to let it fall from her hand upon the floor, and, closing her eyes, almost vow to look upon it no more

And now it was, that, for the first time, commenced the struggle between duty and affection in her innocent and bleeding bosom. Hitherto, in weeping over the peculiar misery of her lot, the loss of Vandeleur, and her accursed union with De l'Espoir, they all appeared so interwoven with, so much the consequence of the miserable catastrophe of her brother's death, that, in weeping for all, she felt only to weep for that one event; and the thought that Vandeleur had believed her guilty, and had cast her from his heart, had so deepened the gulf between them, that never, in looking into it, could she trace even the shadow of former happiness. She lost all remembrance of what she had been, what she might have been, and only lived in the misery of the present; waiting with an anxiety and eagerness, that she sometimes was obliged to pray for strength to resist, for the moment that was to set her spirit free, and to reunite her, as she fondly hoped, to her beloved brother. She looked to his spirit now as

her only friend—the only one, except the Divine Being, from whom she hoped for justice or for mercy !

Such had been her feelings hitherto. But the sight of Vandeleur—her first, her only love ;—he who had gathered the fluttering feelings of her young heart unto himself, and first given them, as it were, “ a local habitation and a name ;”—he who had given re-assurance, sanction, and a haven of welcome, to feelings which she had been half afraid were unbecoming to woman’s dignity, and valued them as the most precious treasure of his existence ;—*he* had again appeared before her, and not only manifested by his manner deep and absorbing interest in her fate, but even sought, by means she knew to be uncongenial to his nature, to renew an intercourse with her. “ For what purpose ? to what could he mean it should tend ? ” were questions she asked herself, and which, though unable to answer definitively, all ended in the one conviction, that he could intend nothing unworthy of her or of himself. But

then—was his opinion in this or any other particular any longer to be her guide? Could she indeed trust her heart's feelings in a renewed intercourse with him, when she already felt it beat so wildly at merely seeing again his handwriting addressed to her,—so wildly, that she dared not cast another look upon it, until she had endeavoured to school that heart into a state of calmness becoming the wedded wife of another man?

For this purpose she flung herself upon her knees, and, uttering a fervent prayer to be purified, guided, and directed, she bowed her head upon the seat at which she knelt, and endeavoured dispassionately to consider whether or not she ought to destroy the billet without allowing herself the indulgence of perusing it; or whether, considering the circumstances in which she stood, she was not justified in, at least, hearing the wishes of one whom she looked upon as little less than perfect. She considered the serious interests that were involved

have been forced upon me, I trust I ever shall be faithful; but it cannot be that I am to endanger—I know not what; run risks the extent of which I cannot estimate; set at nought every friendly caution, and perhaps extend the ruin I have set at work still more widely,—unless I have first asked the permission to act right, which I know would be refused me! and to ask it of whom? Oh, God! oh, God!” She paused, and a cold shudder passed over her. “But this latter is not the feeling I am to encourage now,” she said, recollecting herself; “and in meeting Vandeleur,—*Vandeleur*? do I indeed again pronounce that name?—in meeting him, as I believe I am justified in doing, I must be doubly watchful that no feeling creeps in, which will cause me hereafter to repent it.”

She had no sooner come to this resolution, than, in order to keep her spirits in the calm and quiet tone she deemed becoming, she took up a book and attempted to read. But she over-

calculated her own composure : whatever she might be enabled outwardly to assume, all was excitement and perturbation within. Nothing beneath heaven itself could be purer or holier than her intentions and her feelings ; yet something there was that told her she was once more incurring a deep responsibility, should her husband return and find her engaged with Vandeleur. But no, that was not to be apprehended : he had made an appointment for the day, and he had no inducement to forego it for his home. But, should the circumstance ever reach his ears ?—Impossible ! No one there had ever seen Vandeleur ; and besides, he was to be disguised ; and she could trust even her fame itself to his precautions. But should her own feelings betray her ?—she clasped her hands, and prayed to be “led not into temptation.”

The words were yet upon her lips, when one of the servants came to inform her that a friar, who had once been in England, was come to speak with the English lady.

Gertrude underwent a violent palpitation, but desired him to be shown into a small room which was inside that they generally used for dining, and which no one ever entered except Gertrude herself; who sometimes retired thither for the sake of gazing out upon the champaign view which its window commanded, and endeavouring to conjure up some fanciful resemblance to England. Here she thought the communication which Vandeleur had to make, and which she could not but suppose was of a vital and agitating nature, would be less liable to interruption, while the assumed character of her visiter took from it all appearance of strangeness.

Thither, then, he was shown; and thither, after the delay of a very few minutes, Gertrude repaired to receive the secret visit of the man she had loved so fondly and lost so sadly.

CHAPTER XVII.

The lady of his love—oh, she was changed
As by the sickness of the soul! her mind
Had wander'd from its dwelling, and her eyes
They had not their own lustre, but the look
Which is not of the earth.

BYRON.

WHEN Gertrude entered the dining-room, within which was the little saloon, or closet, in which Vandeleur awaited her, her head was still enveloped in the dark, mourning veil. As Vandeleur approached to meet her, however, she put forth her hand to him from beneath it, and, whatever might be her internal emotions, welcomed him with a calm and dignified seeming.

He took her hand, and led her back to the

little apartment in deep and mournful silence; but, as if feeling the propriety of following her example of composure, and of entering at once upon the business that brought him before her, the moment they were seated, he gently replaced her hand upon her lap, and passing his own over his face, endeavoured to select the gentlest and least startling terms in which to communicate to her, that a warrant was already issued to apprehend her for the murder of her brother! It was in vain, however, that he ran over the vocabulary in his mind—all seemed equally revolting that would have served his purpose, and any he could find courage to utter would have utterly failed in conveying an idea of so horrible a fact. Gertrude, in the mean time, waited in pointed silence for the disclosure that was to form the excuse and justification of their clandestine meeting.

At length, absolutely in despair at the task he had undertaken, and agitated by all the circumstances attending it, Vandeleur leaned his

head back against the wall and uttered a heavy groan.

Gertrude turned towards him in terror ; and having vainly waited a few minutes longer for him to speak, she at last said in a very low and tremulous tone—" You sought this meeting ; have you forgotten wherefore ?"

He turned his eyes slowly and heavily towards her : the folds of her veil had fallen a little to one side, and gave to view that still youthful and lovely face, with its altered expression and faded features.

Vandeleur, as it were, seized upon the glimpse thus accidentally afforded him ; and after suffering his eyes to run hastily two or three times over her whole person, as if to compare it with what it had been, and to mark the ravages which suffering and sorrow had wrought upon it, he suddenly dropped his head between his hands, and burst into convulsive sobbing.

Gertrude was immeasurably terrified,—not by the disclosure this might portend, but by the vio-

lence of his emotion. She rose hastily from her seat, sank down again as hastily, drew her handkerchief rapidly and almost wildly from hand to hand incessantly, while she stole towards Vandeleur glances of mingled tenderness and alarm. His agony seemed to augment—to become uncontrollable—and looking up towards heaven, in a voice of desperation and deprecation, he almost shouted forth, “Oh, God! oh, God! have mercy on us both!”

Gertrude sprang from her seat; and looking wildly on him, and all round the little apartment in which they sat, attempted to spring past him towards the door, in order to make her escape.

He started, and seized her by the arm. “Would you indeed leave me, then, Gertrude? Have you no feeling for me remaining?” He looked on her face, from which her veil had now completely fallen, and was arrested by its wild and wandering expression. Perceiving her lips moving rapidly, he listened to endeavour to catch her words; he concluded she was praying,

for he heard distinctly the words "lead us not into temptation," emphatically repeated.

He was affected—alarmed. "Compose yourself, my dearest Gertrude," he said more gently: "I only meant to ask you, have you indeed no explanation to give me of all the fearful past?"

"Explanation!—*explanation now!*" she repeated, with lips and eyes distended in astonishment, and the latter still wandering rapidly over everything in the room except Vandeleur himself. "Methinks it were rather late now. Ha! ha! ha! No! no! to what purpose *now?* Besides," she added in a lower and a calmer voice,—"*besides, indeed I dare not!*" and she bent her eyes upon the ground.

"Why?" asked Vandeleur soothingly: "is he not absent for the whole day?"

"Oh! I spoke not, I thought not of *him*," she replied very mournfully, "when I said I durst not enter into any explanation of the past. And wherefore in any case, Vandeleur? for *you* could not believe ill of *me*;—yet, to be sure, it

must be all strangely mysterious to you. I can remember *that* now : yet I dare not attempt to satisfy you at present. *No—I dare not,*" she said musingly. Then suddenly turning to him, added :

" Harkee, Godfrey ; I have something to tell you that will shock you : " and she turned as pale as death, laid her hand upon his arm, and seeming to speak with a great and painful effort, whispered—" *Godfrey ! I have been out of my senses for a long, long period !*" Having uttered these frightful words, she looked fixedly in his eyes, as if eagerly seeking for the shock she felt so sure of having imparted.

She was not disappointed. Vandeleur's previous emotion seemed subdued in a moment, and his face reflected the paleness of hers. He gazed upon her with a sick sensation at his heart, such as he had never felt before ; and his feelings at that moment were of so pure, so holy, so subdued a character, that he internally cursed as idle the prejudices of the world, which forbade

him to fold her to his heart, and bid her take comfort there.

He restrained himself, however, lest he should startle her again ; and after gazing on her for a few minutes, with an expression from which she did not shrink, but, on the contrary, seemed to find morbidly soothing, he said—"This, then, is the cause of your being lost so long ; this is the reason why every effort your friends have made to find you has been hitherto unavailing!"

"My friends!—efforts to find me!" she repeated. "Who are those friends? and what those efforts? But no matter—no matter now; tell me not of them: the die is cast, the past is passed, and surely I, at least, may say, 'I've known the worst.'"

"God in his mercy grant it may be so!" said Vandeleur emphatically. "But tell me—tell me, Gertrude," and he would have taken her hand, but she gently prevented him,—“tell me before we proceed farther—and you need neither be offended by the question, nor fear that it is

asked with any selfish view — such, indeed, is at an end with me for ever ;—but tell me, as the friend and guardian on whom your only parent bestowed you, and whose only hope is still to fulfil that trust without other reward now than that of serving you, —have you nothing to complain of on the part of this De l'Espoir, of which the law might avail itself to rid you of him for ever ?”

“Alas ! alas ! no ;—I suppose not. We were legally married with my consent.”

Vandeleur started.

“Nay, start not at that, Godfrey ; let it go with the rest of the mysteries involving me, until I feel able to unfold them. And now I feel so much calmer, that I think I could almost venture. But it was not for that we met,” she said, recollecting herself,—“oh, no, not for that ! And, as I said before, to what could the recital now tend ? For even were it possible that I could be freed, why should I make the effort now ? I trust my sufferings, with my life, are

near their close; and what could it avail now, except to drag before the world a creature who ought rather to seek some hole in which to hide her head?"

"But why—why this, Gertrude? On the contrary, would you not wish that your fair fame and innocence should shine before the world; while he who is the transgressor should pay the forfeit of his crimes?"

"And what might that forfeit be?"

Vandeleur cast down his eyes, and in a low and expressive tone said, "That is as circumstances should be traced to and proved against him."

"I understand you—I know to what you allude," said Gertrude, in a calmer voice than Vandeleur expected. "But is it my part to stand up against *my husband*? Oh! no,—rather than voluntarily swerve from my sworn duty, let me drain the cup to the very dregs; *they* must prove their own remedy at last:" and she held up her hands and eyes to heaven.

“ But there will be no occasion for you to do thus. Let the law take its own course ; only do you retire from the storm for a little while until it passes by, that you may not indeed be called upon in a manner from which you should and ought to shrink.”

“ And who, then, is to originate a prosecution against the count ? My poor father is no more ; surely, it is not——” She hesitated.

“ No, it is *not me*, Gertrude. I, alas ! have no claim to take proceedings against him. But there is one prepared to do it ; one, in short, *has* instituted it,—one, of whom none of us ever thought ; and it is upon this subject that I am here.” He paused.

“ Who can that person be ?” exclaimed Gertrude in the utmost astonishment. “ Who in this world, besides yourself, feels any interest in me ? or, if they did, who has the claim ?”

“ It may not be interest in you that instigates them, my dearest, best Gertrude,” said Vandeleur, inexpressibly affected by her utter

unconsciousness of the cruelty that was meditated against her ; and feeling, from his own excitement, as if each word he uttered must open her eyes forcibly to the truth ; “ but—but—do you not remember your kinsman, George Evelyn ? ”

“ My cousin George ! What interest can he, of all persons, take in me ? I have scarcely ever even seen him ! Can it be gratitude for papa’s having given him his commission ? ”

Vandeleur’s brow became contracted from very pain, as he said in a low tone, with his eyes bent on the floor, “ Are you not aware that he is the next heir after you to your father’s property ? ”

“ Yes ; but what then ? Alas ! I am still in his way—still a shield between him and De l’Espoir.”

Vandeleur forbore to answer ; but his expressive silence arrested Gertrude’s attention. She fixed her eyes eagerly, devouringly, on his embarrassed countenance and working features ;

then suddenly and at once, as if a new light broke in upon her, she sprang to her feet—clapped her hands tightly together—and after pausing for a moment, as if to satisfy herself in her own conjecture, she exclaimed aloud, as her colour varied from pale to red, and from red to pale, in a second—“Hah! I see—I see it all now: how stupid it was of me to hesitate! I understand it now! Mr. Evelyn would have me hanged, and himself inherit my father’s property!”

Vandeleur, who had also risen from his seat when she sprang up, now enclosed both her clasped hands between his, and suffered his silence and deeply sorrowful countenance to tell her that she had guessed rightly.

“It is even so then?” she exclaimed, looking on him with wild and heart-breaking anxiety. “Gracious and eternal God!—oh! Godfrey, Godfrey!” and as if her last hour were indeed come, when all artificial restraints are dispensed with from the consciousness that their

infringement can lead to nothing more—or as if the deep and awful reality of her feelings at that moment refused to descend to the petty distinctions she had till now so scrupulously observed, she slowly sat down again, and laying her head upon Vandeleur's shoulder, burst into the first tears she had shed since they met.

He was rejoiced to find her over-tried feelings vent themselves in this way; and it need scarcely be said, that she did not weep alone. His first impulse, when she leaned her head towards him, again was to catch her to his heart: but the very confidingness and self-abandonment of the movement restrained him once more, that he might not startle her from that resting-place, and that he might not take advantage of the temporary forgetfulness in her, which he could not plead in excuse for himself. He contented himself with still tenderly holding her hands, and suffering his own tears to mingle with hers as they fell together upon them.

She indulged herself for a few minutes in

weeping bitterly, but in perfect silence; and Vandeleur was careful not to interrupt the natural and refreshing current: but as she gazed upon her own and his tears as they poured upon their united hands, apparently the sight of his sorrow began to affect her even above her own, and she hastened to relieve it.

“Dear Godfrey, what are *you* weeping for? You do not believe there is any fear of *this* being proved? No; if there is sense or justice upon earth, it could not stand one single moment!”

“Blessed be God for that word, at all events!” said Vandeleur. “But tell me — tell me why you say so. Tell me all or something respecting it; and, above all, tell me, my own Gertrude, why you are De l’Espoir’s wife?”

Vandeleur asked this question as the mystery he was most desirous to have solved, not from any selfish anxiety, so much as being that which seemed to throw the deepest colouring over the rest; and he wished above all things to learn

what defence the unfortunate girl had it in her power to offer to those who should be interested in accusing her. It served at present, however, only to startle her delicacy, by recalling her recollection. She raised her head from his shoulder, and gazed with a sort of bewildered look of interrogation, first in his face—then on their clasped hands—and gently, but decidedly, drawing hers from between his, she pressed one upon her forehead, and said faintly, “Do not call me *your* Gertrude; it confounds dates in my mind: and, besides, it is not proper *now*.” She sighed heavily. “No; I am again unfit to enter on that dismal tale. Oh! Herbert, Herbert!” and again her tears flowed bitterly.

“Tell me rather,” she resumed, “all particulars about Mr. Evelyn’s intentions against me; and, believe me, I will hear it calmly now; the shock is past.”

It was indeed necessary that she should be informed of them; and accordingly Vandeleur, in the best manner he was able, informed her

of a warrant being already issued to apprehend her, and her husband, for the murder of her brother. He told her, that to apprise her of this, before it should reach her in another form, in order that she might form her own plans accordingly, was the cause of his being now in Russia; and that those plans might be formed according to her own wishes, and free from the baneful influence of the count, was the cause of his having sought this private interview.

Gertrude heard him to the end without again betraying the slightest agitation. It was peculiarly one of her characteristics to bestow and accept good-will with equal simplicity, and one glance of affectionate confidence was all the thanks she now offered to Vandeleur. She remained for some minutes perfectly silent, as if considering of all she had heard; and then, apparently having come to some determination, she asked,

“And why would you not tell the count of this?”

Vandeleur, as delicately as he could, suggested to her the possibility of avoiding the trial, should she shrink from it, by making her escape, and leaving De l'Espoir to clear her fame by his own condemnation.

She smiled coldly, and a pink spot became visible for a moment in either cheek.

"No," said she. "That so hideous, so foul a suspicion should rest upon my name, is indeed severe to bear; so severe, that I would brave all the horrors of such a trial to wash it out, if I had still a link to bind me to this world. But I have not—I have not; and to one who bears in her breast the dreadful consciousness of having done what I have done, however innocent in intention, it matters little what more coals are heaped upon my head. The count has tried to drag me again into the world; in shame and in sorrow I might do my penance in it, but in any other light—never, never! But what makes you so pale?—what have I said anew to shock you?"

“ Did you say—did you say, Gertrude—my unhappy, ill-starred Gertrude,—did you say that it was you indeed——” and his pale quivering lips refused to finish the fearful question.

She took it up,—“ That it was I did it ? Yes, truly was it I !—these hands, Vandeleur ! And thinkest thou I then could care what became of my wretched life !”

Nothing in nature could be more dreadful than the expression of Gertrude’s face as she uttered these words, and held up her hands to show them to Vandeleur as the instruments of her brother’s death. No sculpture, no painting, no words could convey an idea of the fearful contrast between the pale and beautiful features, and calm low tone of voice, and the deep, deep agony of the countenance, and the dilating and contracting pupil of the unquiet eye.

Vandeleur shivered, and literally grew cold, as he listened to and looked upon her. He was almost afraid to speak for fear of exciting her feelings still farther, but ventured at last to say,

as gently as he could, "But, dearest Gertrude, you know poor Herbert's case was already hopeless."

"It was not—it was not! Ten million worlds would I give to know it was! Ay, in spite of all, I might live again, from the very horror of what I have suffered, could I but learn that. But it is over now. No, no; he was getting better,—wretch that I was! he was getting better, if I had but left him to Nature. Dr. C. indeed, made my father uneasy about him; but I think, and always thought, my father misunderstood him, for Herbert's mind certainly had recovered very considerably." Then, as a new idea seemed to strike her, "Godfrey!" she exclaimed with sudden energy, "suppose you were to ask the question of Dr. C.? I could be no worse than I am. And, oh God of heaven! if he were to say I had only hastened his release——"

She paused, overcome with her own enthusiastic hopes; but presently observing Vande-

leur's mournful silence, "You do not answer;—you look sad?" she gasped forth; "you have already ascertained that but for me he would have recovered?"

"No, no, dearest Gertrude, I have not indeed; but,—I regret to say,—poor Dr. C. is himself no more."

Gertrude uttered a piercing shriek. Perhaps until that moment some indescribable, some undefinable, hope had lingered in her bosom that the heaviest part of her heavy burden of sorrow might yet be removed. It was over now; for a moment she felt as if she had committed the deed over again. But this could not last: the reality of affliction was too present with her to yield long to an imaginary one; she even made a powerful effort to bring back her mind to the matter before them.

"Then I will yield myself to my fate. I am the wife of the Count de l'Espoir. I still believe—at least, oh God! I hope—he was as innocent in intention as I was myself, as to the fearful catastrophe. My resolution is formed

and fixed. It is this: that you, Vandeleur, inform the count of the danger he is threatened with: he is skilled in the ways of the world, and will know what to do; and, as he does, I will do. To fulfil my duty, whatever it may be, is but a slight penance for the crime I have committed."

Vandeleur was about to answer, doubtless to endeavour to lay more clearly before her all she undertook to perform, in adopting this resolution, when a female servant hastily opening the door, announced the unexpected return of De l'Espoir! The woman had no reason to suppose that the mendicant friar was other than he professed himself to be, and her evident alarm seemed only to betray the general feeling excited by De l'Espoir's presence.

But neither Vandeleur nor Gertrude had time to speculate on this, when De l'Espoir himself appeared. There is no use in disguising it—nothing could look more confounded than they both did; and the best proof of how far such confusion may be from guilt, is, that Vandeleur,

who wished to deliver him over to meet his deserts alone, did not betray more than did Gertrude, who had just expressed her sincere determination to abide by him to the last.

De l'Espoir, as usual, was perfectly collected, and apparently composed. The dark malignant expression of his eye, and cold sneer upon his lip, did nothing to contradict this. He removed his hat as he encountered Vandeleur, and calmly said, "So, sir, it is now my turn to give you a surprise," (alluding to the fatal evening in the arbour): "may I beg your presence for a moment in this outer room? You, madam, please to retire with your spy-servant."

There are moments when the weakest exhibit extraordinary courage, if sufficient inducement or provocation is offered to them. Gertrude, although in general subdued in the presence of De l'Espoir, almost to the passiveness of a machine or an idiot, gathering in one moment, from his manner and expression, that

death was in his eye, and remembering that his pistols lay in that outer room, almost already within his grasp—forgot every other feeling in her terror for his and Vandeleur's life, and, suddenly seizing his arm, was about to inform him of the whole object of the meeting.

He did not give her time : he looked upon her one moment with such an expression of fell hatred as a demon might be supposed to cast upon an angel which had thwarted him in some favourite scheme ; then seizing her by the shoulder, flung her from him in the direction of a large metal stove, which stood in the chamber, with a force which would probably have terminated her sorrows at a blow, had not the woman, who still lingered in the room, received her in her arms and borne her from his presence.

Vandeleur now lost all command of himself, and seizing De l'Espoir by the throat, " Monster ! villain ! fiend !" he exclaimed, " would you add one more victim to your list ?"

De l'Espoir made no reply, but in the struggle snatched at a pistol, and calling to Vandeleur to take the other and defend himself, took his stand to shoot him across the table.

Vandeleur recoiled : one second's thought served to convince him, that if Gertrude's husband fell by his hand under such circumstances, her fame was indeed blasted for ever. "Madman ! demon ! I will not fire !" he said : " I will not take the pistol, lest it should discharge itself at such a monster, and so cheat the hangman, whose gripe is already upon you."

De l'Espoir, in his fury, which was now uncontrollable in proportion to the restraint he was in general capable of imposing on it, either did not understand this threat, or if he did, remembering that his bitterest enemy that moment stood almost within his power, seized the second pistol, and hurling it towards Vandeleur, exclaimed, "Defend yourself, or die the death of a dog." Then, without waiting for an answer, or giving Vandeleur time to put himself in a

posture of defence, he a second time laid weltering in his blood the man who from his earliest youth seemed destined to cross his path.

The report of the pistol immediately brought the numerous domestics, that are always to be seen about the poorest establishment in St. Petersburg, rushing to the room; and De l'Espoir, hurrying from amongst them, without seeming even to hear their questions and exclamations, rushed with demon strides to the chamber of Gertrude, and rudely burst the door open with his foot. He found her lying pale and terrified on a couch. "Ay," he exclaimed, grinding his teeth and extending his arms in fury towards her as he approached—"Ay, you may well be frightened for what your infamy has brought to pass!—your lover lies slain by my hand! And now tell me, I command you, what he meant, or whether he had any meaning, in what he uttered of the hangman being awaiting me?"

Gertrude, without betraying any other emo-

tion than an universal tremor of her person, recapitulated, as well as she could, the purport of the information which Vandeleur had given her.

De l'Espoir listened until she had finished ; then glaring upon her, and setting his teeth more firmly, he advanced quite close up to her, and said fiercely, "I see ! And you were to have eloped with your lover, and to have appeared with him in evidence against me, until you had succeeded in becoming a widow and marrying him!"

Gertrude showed no additional sign of terror at his menacing voice and attitude, but, thinking it right to disabuse him of this error, she simply and gently pronounced the monosyllable "No," in a voice that seemed overstrained and cracked from internal suffering.

"No ! What then ? What may your plans have been, if I may be so bold ?"

"To be guided by you ;" and she sighed heavily.

"Ay ? indeed ! Did Vandeleur, then, come to

caution *me* ?—answer me at once. Did he not urge secrecy from *me* ? Did he not urge you to fly, and to leave me to my fate ?” Gertrude remained silent.

“It is well,” he said. “And you were such a dutiful wife that you would not listen to him, I suppose ? and only received him into that closet in disguise in my absence, to lecture him upon the immorality of his conduct ? No, no, Gertrude ; you hate me, and *I hate you* ; and, by all that is sacred ! I would not, for all the possessions now become so precarious, be burthened with you longer. While I thought you a simple, drivelling, but harmless idiot or maniac, you and your estates might have balanced each other ; but now, you may both go to the devil for me ! I loathe you, and I despise them.—Why heard I not of this heir-at-law before ? By Heaven ! I believe Vandeleur is himself the instigator of it all, aided and encouraged by you. But, be it so ; ye shall both be disappointed : I shall not stand a trial which the illiberal feelings

and ignorant prejudices of your brutal country would alike lead them to decide against me. Follow the bent of your own inclinations, and see if the events of this night will not be considered to justify me in seeking my own safety alone." And so saying, he flung out of the chamber.

For some minutes after his departure, Gertrude had not energy sufficient even to rise and ring the bell; and when she did drag her trembling limbs so far, no answer was returned to the summons. She grew frightened now on another score; and, collecting energy from despair, she rang it again, and with so much violence, that the same female who had announced De l'Espoir's return, hastened to her. She inquired calmly if Vandeleur were dead.

"Dead, ma'am! No, Lord love you! nor like to die, say I, if he was taken in time. But what with one thing, and what with another, my own hands are the only surgeon he has had as yet. We had him carried to a room, and I

stopped the wound, which is in his right side."

"Where is the Count De l'Espoir?"

"He is gone out ; and his servant says he was shut up for some time in his room first, rolling up papers and taking money out of his desk ; but he gave no orders, and did not say if he would be home to-night."

A conviction instantly flashed upon Gertrude that she should never see him more. She lay back on her seat for a moment overwhelmed with this awful thought, and the peculiar cruelty of abandoning her in such a moment : but, as the original character of poor Gertrude's mind was very far removed from weakness or indecision, however artless and easily guided by those in whom she placed confidence, even the cruel malady which had been forced upon her by her horrible fate, had not had power permanently to impair it, although it left her still liable to over-excitement on certain trials of her feelings. Her principles and excellent under-

standing now came to her support, and told her that a crisis was come when she must act with promptitude and decision, or involve one dearer than herself in calumny and disgrace, if not endanger his life.

Without a moment's hesitation, she desired that Monsieur Dumoulin, a French physician who was on terms of great intimacy both with De l'Espoir and herself, and who attended her with skill and kindness during her illness, should be sent for. He was one of those gentlemen who supported her out of the theatre the evening before, when Vandeleur discovered her; and although she was conscious that her agitation on that occasion, together with the scene now awaiting him, must raise strange surmises in his mind, the energetic resolution she had formed, to be guided throughout this critical period by reason, rather than by feeling, enabled her to disregard what at a calmer moment might have caused her to hesitate about employing him.

As soon as she had given orders to this effect, she sat down to collect her thoughts, and consider seriously what was now in her power to rescue herself from the fearful and desolate situation she was in at that moment.

That her husband *might* return she knew was possible; but, even if he should, she was but too well aware, that for her to continue with him after the events of that evening, and the impression they were sure to leave upon his dark and wicked mind, would be absolutely impossible, even to a spirit so bruised and broken as was hers. She could not face a new species of sorrow in the worst form—that of suspicion and disgrace.

But, that he would *not* return she did not even for a moment doubt. The threat of leaving her, which she now believed he had put in execution, he had often uttered before, when, exasperated by the sight of her silent and uncomplaining, but undisguised and hopeless misery, he cursed the life of her father, which

made him, as he brutally expressed it, serve so hard an apprenticeship for his property.

Nor was this, even when uttered, a mere vague or idle threat. He had often weighed the matter seriously in his mind, during the period of Gertrude's mental alienation and subsequent suffering; but there were considerations which served at that time to avert its being put into execution,—the distant prospect of still reaping the rich reward of what he now called *his* endurance—the unheard-of barbarity of abandoning a creature in the state to which he had reduced Gertrude, to the care of total strangers, in a foreign and far distant country—and perhaps more than all, the interest felt for her by her attending physician, who accompanied them to Russia, and the nature of whose influence over De l'Espoir will be hereafter explained. But now that the prospect of his ever obtaining the coveted wealth, which had led him so far on the road to perdition, appeared surrounded with difficulties and dangers which he had little hope

of being able to overcome under all the attending circumstances ; now that he either thought, or affected to think, that Gertrude had found a friend whose counsels she preferred to his,—what was there to restrain him from seeking safety in flight ; and, hushing up the story, as he had done others before, leaving Gertrude to stand between him and her kinsman's claim, and reappear himself on a stage where his talents and adroitness should cause the whole matter to be laughed at as a story in romance ?

It is not to be supposed that Gertrude carried her meditations on his frame of mind quite so far as this ; but she keenly remembered enough of the past to form her conclusions of the future : and now it was that she blessed, as inspiration, the fancy which had induced her to select St. Petersburg as the remote scene in which she was, in compliance with her husband, to be forced to enter the world again. But how to render that fancy available, now required her deepest consideration.

Not yet a fortnight in St. Petersburg, she was still a perfect stranger, not only to its habits and customs, but to every human being that breathed within it, except the physician who had accompanied them thither, De l'Espoir himself, and him who now lay stretched upon a sick bed by his hand. Even the servants were strangers to her ; as De l'Espoir deemed it judicious to remove from about her, in her convalescence, as many as possible of those who had been witnesses of her illness : and thus was she left without even the humblest friend to whom she could turn for sympathy or assistance. Probably it was well for her that it was so ; for there are certain states of the mind in which the slightest hope of foreign support will induce us to depend entirely upon it until it fails beneath us, when without it we should have grown energetic from despair or necessity.

Such was Gertrude's case at present. One resolution she came to at once ; which was, that no consideration should induce her to see Van-

deleur again. Every care and attention that gratitude and affection could suggest, she ordered to be lavished upon him ; but she determined not by the slightest yielding to her own feelings to add to the calumny that she knew was hovering over her, and which one unguarded movement might precipitate upon her head.

Her next step was to see Monsieur Dumoulin ; to mention, simply, that a dispute had arisen between the count and Vandeleur, in which the latter had been wounded ; and to endeavour to learn from him what means it was proper for her to use, in order to throw herself upon the protection of the lady of the English ambassador.

Accordingly, when Monsieur Dumoulin arrived, and had examined Vandeleur's wound, he was summoned to the presence of the countess.

To the first part of her communication he paid just as much attention as other circum-

stances led him to think it deserved; for he was shrewd and discerning: to the second part, he was able to answer little more than that he should next morning make it his business to procure her the information she required; as for himself, he knew nothing more than where the house of the English ambassador was situate, and that his lady was to have a splendid ball that evening. This he had learned by chance from Lady Harriet Stuart, whom he had been attending for a heavy cold which she had caught on her arrival at St. Petersburg two days before; but who insisted, contrary to his advice, on her being well enough to attend the fête that evening.

To remain another night in the hazardous and desperate situation in which Gertrude was now placed, was an alternative beyond her powers calmly to contemplate for a moment, even had she not deemed it absolutely incorrect; and her enthusiasm, and ignorance of the customs of the world, for once befriending her,

she formed her own plan, and during the absence of Dumoulin, who did not find Vandeleur's wound, though severe and painful, so alarming as to require his incessant presence, she put it into execution.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON :

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Dorset Street, Fleet Street.

VANDELEUR;

OR,

ANIMAL MAGNETISM.

A NOVEL.

Ye shall have miracles, ay, sound ones too,
Seen, heard, attested, everything but true.

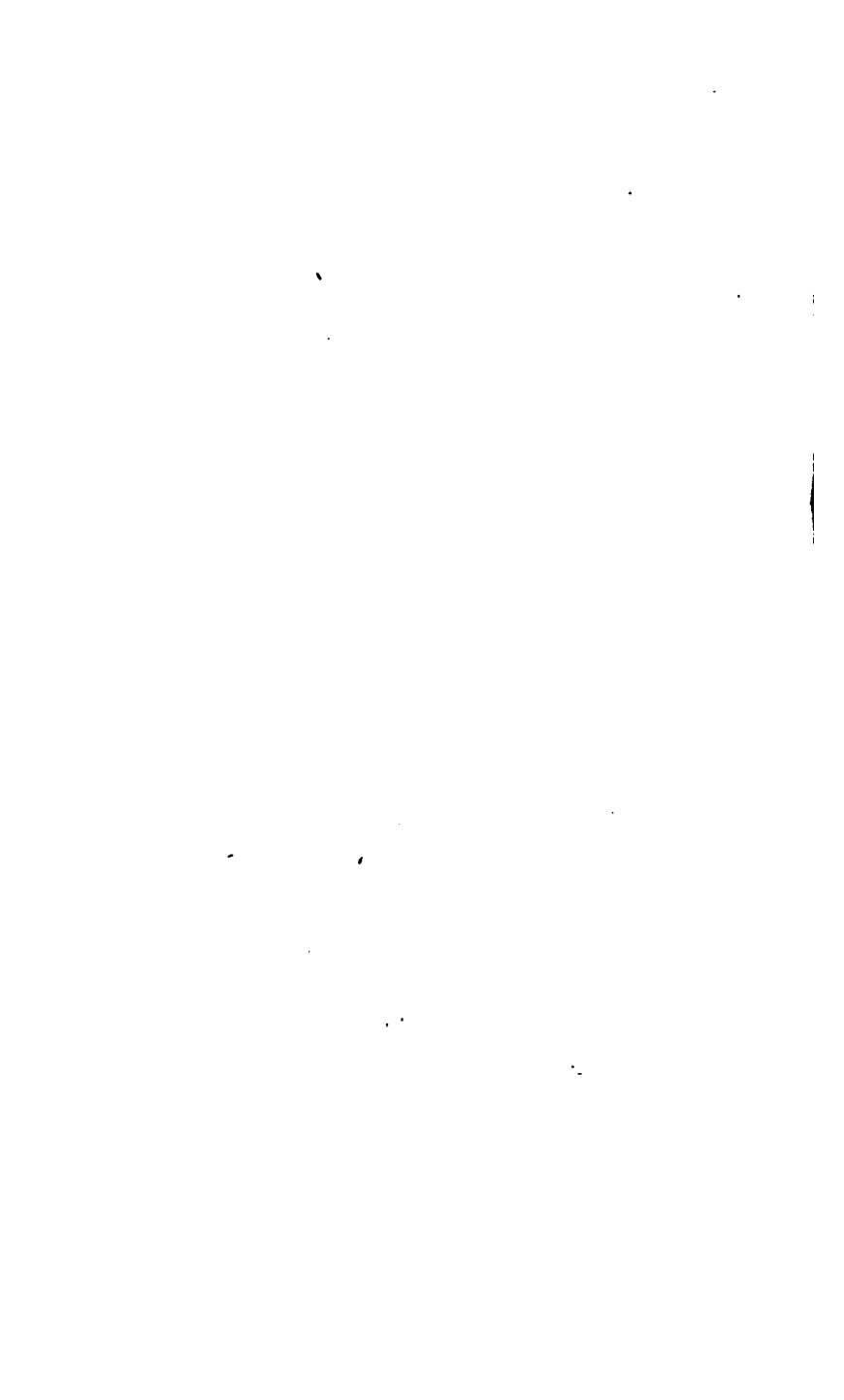
Veiled Prophet.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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1836.



VANDELEUR.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Man may the sterner virtues know,
Determined justice, truth severe.
But female hearts with pity glow,
And woman holds affliction dear.

CRABBE.

WHAT different scenes are enacting at the same instant on the great theatre of the world ! Tragedy, comedy, farce, melodrame, and all the other varieties that genius or fancy can imagine, proceed, each regardless of the other ; and yet intuitively each performs his part so well, that, under the one great Master-hand, the most opposite parts are made in the end sub-

servient to each other, and all is blended into one harmonious whole.

On the self-same evening on which Gertrude was deserted by her villanous husband, and, all circumstances considered, thrown into a situation as wretched as could well be imagined for a young and delicate woman—delicate alike in mind and body—the mansion of the British ambassador in St. Petersburg, was thrown open to receive a gay concourse of visitors. The beauty, youth, high rank, and splendid fortune of his lady, had created a great sensation even in that cold climate; which, together with her noble character and elegant mind, caused her balls and soirées to be acknowledged as the models of good taste and fashion. No expense had been spared to congregate the luxuries of every climate at her shrine; and at seasons when the inclemency of the weather deprived the hardy Russ of some of his “fair proportions,” the most delicate Eastern rose was seen to bloom in the bosom of the fair English-woman.

At the precise moment which this chapter is meant to open upon, she reclined upon a costly divan, of peculiar construction and magnificence, the especial gift of the Emperor of all the Russias to herself. Her dress was a graceful demi-toilette,—or, at least, what might have been considered such, but for the rich jewels with which she was laden; and which, as the *cassette* still lay open beside her, gave the idea of a whimsical fit of indolence; refusing to suffer the annoyance of changing her costume of the morning, even to receive the noble guests of the evening, and compromising the matter by sending for her jewels: while, without moving from her luxurious seat, she glanced her eyes, now and then, to one or other of the splendid mirrors by which the reception-room was surrounded, as she tried on one costly toy after another, and selected those which suited best with her *dégagée* dress.

The occupation and the scene might have become an Eastern princess; while the high and

aristocratic cast of her fine features, together with the air of listless languor which at this moment sat upon them, would not have misbecome the character, had she not been betrayed by her own island's peculiar beauty—the perfect blonde of her rich complexion and silken tresses.

She soon, however, tired of her feminine occupation ; and as it yet wanted an hour or more of the time when she might expect her guests, she took up a book that lay beside her, as if to while away that hour. Apparently, the book had not the power of charming longer than the jewels ; for presently she threw it also from her, and touching a little golden bell that lay within her reach, the attendant spirit appeared.

“ Let baby be brought to me,” she said ; but the answer returned was that baby slept.

“ Pshaw ! I think she always sleeps when I most wish for her,” she muttered half-pettishly, half-fondly : and again she raised her eyes to the beautiful toy which sang out the hours in

sweet music for her ear, as if to drown the hoarse voice of Time, and pointed to the passing moments with a golden rose ; as if music, gold, or flowers could beguile one step of his steady tread, or hide one wrinkle of his furrowed brow !

There still remained the hour to be got over, and seldom did the fair islander feel so little inclination to turn it to account. She yielded to her languor for the present ; and dismissing her jewel-box, rejecting her book, and entrenching herself more deeply in the downy depth of her cushions, she suffered herself to sink into a dreamy slumber. Its duration was not destined to be much longer than that of the other resources she had tried.

Scarcely had she quite “forgot herself” in some fairy vision, when she was startled back to life and all its realities by the massive doors of the chamber being thrown open, and Lady Harriet Stuart announced by one of her English servants. The lady instantly followed on

the announcement, and the door was closed behind her.

The noble hostess started up to receive her ; and casting yet one more hasty glance at the beautiful timepiece, rather apologetic than reproachful, was advancing to receive her guest with her usual grace, when the latter, rushing towards her, wildly flung herself at her feet, and seizing hold of her dress, buried her face in it, and burst into hysteric sobbing.

The lady shrieked—and looking hastily round for her little golden bell, was about to snatch it and ring for assistance, when the stranger, perceiving her intention, seized both her wrists, and holding them gently, but with sufficient force, deprived her of the power of executing her purpose. In this movement, however, she necessarily looked up ; and there was that in the wasted loveliness and woe-begone expression of her face and person, that at once arrested and riveted the attention of her to whom she clung, while it served in part to increase that

lady's terror. She saw, not only that the person before her was not the Lady Harriet Stuart whom she had known in England, but was not any one whom she had ever beheld before. Still, there was something in her beautiful young face, and beseeching though energetic manner, that caused the kind and tender heart of the ambassadress to feel as much of pity as of displeasure, or even of terror.

The stranger's brow was decked with a wreath of jewels; her once beautiful, but now emaciated arms, were laden with rich workmanship, and altogether her dress was such as might have become an expected guest of the evening.

She perceived the eyes of her unwilling hostess drinking in these strange appearances, and, laughing wildly, she exclaimed, "Yes, yes! I am decked, lady, but not for you! I am your guest, but not by your invitation; and these misplaced emblems of gaiety and mirth are only assumed to elude the vigilance of your servants. You see I am not the Lady Harriet

Stuart ; but learning by an accidental observation that she was but a few days arrived in Russia, and was invited here to-night, I trusted to the chance of none of your servants having seen her yet, that I should be able to pass them, and gain access to your presence—under cover of her name, for—the outlawed fratricide Gertrude Evelyn !”

The ambassadress uttered another piercing shriek, not only at this frightful annunciation, but from the very excitement of her nerves at so strange an interview.

“Ay, lady, shriek and shrink from me,” the unfortunate girl continued, “like the rest of an unfeeling and short-sighted world ; but know, that as there is a God above us, you are not more guiltless, more incapable in intention of the crime imputed to me, and for which my brain has maddened, and is maddening fast again, than she who now stands before you.” And she arose, and stood indeed a fitting emblem of dignified despair.

There was something in her words, manner, and whole appearance, that spoke to the noble and ingenuous heart of her whom she addressed, with the irresistible force of truth and nature.

"Sit down—pray sit down," she said in a voice broken and gasping from agitation and alarm, as she sank herself into her seat; "and let me know to what I owe this interview."

"Permit me first, noble lady," said Gertrude, "to ask one question. Is Mrs. Vandeleur with you in Russia at present?"

"She is not; she is in England: she felt unequal to the journey and the change of climate. Are you acquainted with her? If so, you have indeed a claim upon my best services?" answered the Duchess of Castleton; for we need no longer have recourse to equivocal titles and epithets to disguise that it was she.

"Alas! no," said Gertrude, "I have not that claim; and yet it is a deep and deadly disappointment to me to learn that she is not

here, for she would have felt a deep interest in me, and one from which I need not shrink."

"And is there nothing I can do for you for her sake?" asked the duchess, with increasing commiseration, as she saw the pitiable effect her communication produced on the mysterious stranger.

"Oh! much, much! if you will do it;—to shelter and to shield me,—to protect and to advise me,—and, believe me, I deserve it at your hands. You look astonished; but it is even so: the innocent and the oppressed deserve justice and pity at the hands of the powerful and the good. There has been a warrant issued, and which will in a few days pass through your noble husband's hands, to apprehend and bring me and my husband to trial for the murder of my brother. My husband has fled—I believe for ever, from me, on hearing of it; and, oh! lady, I come to you to throw myself upon your mercy for advice and protection."

The duchess's manner and countenance as-

sumed a coldness it had not yet worn, at this, as it appeared, unreasonable claim.

"My protection," she said, "in such a case is not in my own power to bestow: I am not here to counteract the measures of the government. For my advice, it is, that you render yourself up at once to the laws of your country, which, if you are as innocent as you assert, and as I fully believe, will not fail to acquit you before the eyes of the world. In the mean time, the moments are gliding swiftly over. I am truly concerned that I am so entirely engaged to my friends this evening; but, as I feel certain you would not choose to appear amongst them under your present circumstances, it would be unkind and unfeeling in me not to inform you that they may now momentarily arrive."

Gertrude's eye mechanically followed that of the duchess to the timepiece; but to her it presented no idea: her ear only was alive to the cold and chilling words—her heart to the altered manner. She clasped her hands over

her brow, which now burned, while she appeared next moment to become even paler than before.

“What is to become of me?” she muttered in distraction; and, falling upon her knees once more, she clasped her hands together and exclaimed, “I cannot go! Duchess of Castleton, I *cannot* go! If you have the feelings of a woman, take pity upon me, when I tell you that the only man I ever loved—he to whom I was within a few days of being united for ever—lies at this moment in my house, wounded severely by my husband’s hand, and that husband fled I know not whither! If not for the sake of sweet charity, at least for your Mrs. Vandeleur’s sake, grant me your protection, for—my affianced lover is her only son!”

The duchess visibly started, and scarcely suppressed another scream, so great was her surprise at this announcement.

Gertrude attributed her emotion, and the critical glance with which she now again ran over her face and person, to her interest in Mrs. Vande-

leur ; for Godfrey, in confessing to her that he had loved before, had never hinted at the object ; and no accidental circumstance had ever brought the idea into her mind of its having been his mother's pupil.

There was a momentary pause. Gertrude spoke again. "Have I not yet touched your heart ?" she asked imploringly. "I know not how much or how little of my frightful story has reached the public ear ; but if you have any doubts upon your mind respecting me, I will speak to you as might a Catholic at the confessional, and you will not refuse me your sympathy then."

"Did you say that Major Vandeleur was the person to whom you were betrothed, and who now lies in your house wounded by your husband's hand ?"

"I did ; and it is true. But let not that——" Here a violent ringing at the door, and hasty steps and bustle upon the stairs, announced that the guests were beginning to assemble. Gertrude

stopped short in her appeal, and, scared and terrified, seemed disposed to fly she knew not whither.

The duchess appeared little less agitated. She seized Gertrude by the arm. "Tell me in one word," she exclaimed, "as there is truth in Heaven, *ought* I to shelter you? Why is your lover in your house? why is he wounded by your husband's hand?"

"Alas! alas! the question shows that you know neither of them. But let *my* being here, speak *my* wishes and *my* feelings."

"It is true—it must be true!" said the duchess hastily. "Come with me:" and they escaped by one door, as the duke, with some of the company of the evening, entered at the other.

"There is no time for ceremony now," the duchess said, as she hurried Gertrude along the passages: "I must, were it only to avoid suspicion, return instantly to receive my guests; and you must consent to become a prisoner in my dressing-room. I cannot even admit my own

women to the secret, as it could not fail to lead to conjecture ; and I would not for worlds involve the duke : so I must e'en lock the door upon you myself, and trust to my wits to make some excuse." So saying, she hurried Gertrude in, locked the door, and depositing in her tiny reticule the weightiest burden that had ever expanded its embroidered sides, returned to her business of the evening.

She performed her part indeed as lady of the revels ; but never in the course of her short and happy life did she acquit herself with so ill a grace, or sat so heavy a cloud upon that noble brow. Her temples throbbed almost to madness ; and such was the excited state of her nerves, that once or twice, when suddenly addressed, she started, and uttered a low and stifled shriek.

Such symptoms in one accustomed to be the life and soul of every assembly, particularly within her own especial precincts, could not fail to attract attention ; and at length, in answer

to the general solicitude expressed for her health, she was obliged to acknowledge an overpowering headache. This avowal of what, in fact, it was beyond her utmost efforts longer to conceal, soon relieved her from her guests ; and offering the same apology to the duke, she bade him a hurried good-night, and fled to the chamber where she had concealed the unfortunate Gertrude.

How had she passed her time in the interim ? Had she been disposed to envy, or even had her mind been sufficiently disengaged for observation and admiration : there was ample food for each and all in the little apartment to which she was thus unpremeditatedly consigned. Her dressing-room, the duchess had called it, and such indeed was its destination—but so tastefully and so splendidly arranged, that every article of furniture or of dress that met the eye called forth an inquiry whether it was not placed there for ornament alone. The brilliant lamp exhaled perfumes ; the mother-of-pearl table seemed en-

adorned with the jewels it was destined to display for its mistress's selection.

But Gertrude had not an eye or a heart for all this ; she only perceived a deep arm-chair, and, throwing herself into it, endeavoured, by pressing her hands on her eyes, and concealing from them all outward objects, to turn them upon herself, and calmly to consider what she had done, and what remained for her to do. The truth soon became sufficiently evident to her, that, whatever power she might have had over the past, little remained to her over the future. She had thrown herself and her fate into the hands of one an utter stranger to her, but whom she had heard Vandeleur mention with esteem, and who, being educated by *his* mother, must be all that was amiable. So had reasoned her fond, youthful heart, in a far-distant country, when she made what appeared so strange a choice as that of St. Petersburg for their temporary residence ; and so whispered her hopes even now, not the less vi-

vidly perhaps from the consciousness that she had no longer left herself a choice.

Nor did she repent of having placed herself in that predicament. The trying interview over, in the calm solitude of the dressing-room, her nerves by degrees relaxed from their excited tone, and she recalled to her recollection the reasons and the principles which had led her to adopt that course. It might have appeared more rational, more consistent with the customs of the world, to have waited until next morning, and formally presented her petition to the duchess. But most of the misfortunes that had already befallen Gertrude were owing to her peculiar ignorance of the customs of the world, joined to a tendency in her character to hold them very light in comparison with her ideas of right and wrong.

She had considered it wrong to remain another hour under the roof with Vandeleur, after all that had occurred; and yet a vague idea that M. Dumoulin would endeavour to overcome

those scruples prevented her from communicating with him. Accordingly, as soon as he left the hotel for a few hours in order to visit other patients, Gertrude, availing herself of the information she had elicited from him, rummaged out some dresses and trinkets, which De l'Espoir had insisted upon purchasing for her, in the prospect of presenting her to the world as his bride ; and decking herself in them, she sent for a conveyance, and directed the man to drive to the house of the English ambassador. The man stared, but obeyed ; and so far all was well.

Gertrude, in forming her plans, had been calm and composed ; but the fuss of dressing, and the strange appearance she wore in her own eyes, like a decorated victim, (to use a worn-out simile,) flushed her spirits a good deal. Then came the thought of giving Vandeleur over to the care of strange domestics. True, she hoped to interest a friend, if not his mother, in his behalf ; and it was only now she recollected how agitated must have been their interview, when she had forgotten to

inquire, or he to mention, whether or not his mother was in Russia. She would have sent now to ask him, but was informed that he slept by the effects of some anodyne, and that the doctor had given orders that he should not be disturbed. She left a note for him, beseeching him to consider all that was theirs in the hotel his own ; and another for M. Dumoulin, bespeaking his attention as a friend to Vandeleur. To neither did she communicate her project ; for she felt, that if the duchess consented to befriend her, she might reasonably choose that it should be kept a secret. This caused her silence to Dumoulin ; and for Vandeleur, for both their sakes, she deemed it better that he should be left in ignorance of her hiding-place.

- These considerations, with repeated charges to the woman to be careful and attentive, set her a good deal at rest on the subject of leaving Vandeleur ; but when she found herself actually shut into the carriage, and whirling away, to present herself in so strange a manner, and un-

der such unusual, if not suspicious circumstances, to an utter stranger, her agitation increased to a fearful degree. Once or twice she was on the point of turning back ; but this, she feared, was only a return of her malady, and she forced herself to proceed. And finally, by the time that she arrived, and was shown into the presence of the duchess, she had nearly relinquished all control over her shattered, overwrought feelings, and gave vent to them in the manner already related.

The calmness of the dressing-room, however, as we have said, composed her spirits ; and when the duchess was able to rejoin her, she was agreeably surprised to find a person so different from her she had left a few hours before. Gertrude hastened forward to meet her ; but it was with the subdued and melancholy air of one rationally alive to the peculiarities of her situation, and of the intrusion of which she had been guilty. At the moment that both resumed their seats, it would have appeared that the duchess was the more agitated of the two : she was the

first to speak, however; for, now that the excitement of Gertrude's nerves had subsided, she seemed incapable of attempting an adequate apology.

"I am happy to perceive," the duchess began, "that your spirits are a good deal recovered from the hurry they appeared to have undergone. I feared that such a lengthened confinement, without refreshment, would have wholly overcome you. I have ordered some to the next room, and from thence I shall convey it to you myself; for you are by this time, I am sure," she said with a gentle but expressive smile, "fully aware how cautious I must be, whether for your sake or my own, of betraying that I have concealed in my dressing-room the person whom you inform me the duke will in a few days be called on to have apprehended. I trust, and I believe, that you will be able in a few words to reconcile me to myself for this apparent breach of public, as well as private duty, when you have had a glass of wine." So say-

ing, she left the room, and returned, carrying in herself her own especial salver with some refreshments, now become indeed very necessary to poor Gertrude, who accordingly did not refuse to partake of them.

“And now,” said the duchess, who felt her heart rapidly softening, and cautious suspicion slipping as rapidly away, as she gazed upon the pure and beautiful brow of the evidently artless and interesting creature before her—And now, wrap yourself in that shawl, as I shall myself in this one. I have sent my people to bed, saying I cannot sleep for a severe headache ; and, as they have replenished the stove, we shall be as comfortable as your story will admit of.”

Gertrude fully appreciated the considerate kindness of the duchess’s manner, and determining to show her sense of it as far as lay in her power, she commenced at once a full and undisguised account of all that had befallen her, from her betrothal with Major Vandeleur, up to the fatal scene in the harbour at Beauton.

Here there was a complete interruption, not only from her tears and violent sobs, and the tears of the duchess, which now flowed plentifully with hers, but also from her not having completely recovered her senses from the moment of her fainting in De l'Espoir's arms, until she found herself in London, in consequence of a strong narcotic administered to her by her betrayer the moment he perceived her begin to revive, and then so imperfectly, that it will be much more satisfactory to our readers that we should take up the thread.

CHAPTER XIX.

Thou'lt fly ?—as easily may reptiles run
The gaunt snake once hath fix'd his eyes upon ;
As easily, when caught, the prey may be
Pluck'd from his loving folds, as thou from me.
No, no ; 'tis fix'd—let good or ill betide,
Thou'rt mine till death, till death Mokanna's bride!
Veiled Prophet.

It was a soft and beautiful night : the moon shone so brightly in the clear, deep, mellow sky, that the lamps of London looked squalid in her beams ; and even in that home of artificial sensations, her pure chastened light wakened in the breasts of many some recollection of the scenes of nature. By far the greater number, however, this glorious sight was unperceived or disregarded. Some hurried on to the midnight revel and the crowded room, as if nothing purer or more animating were within the reach

of man. Some crept along to the haunts of vice, as if there were neither moon nor stars to witness their unhallowed orgies ; while others plodded their weary way to misery and home, for no better reason than that they had not the means of making their way anywhere else. To neither of these three classes, however, belonged two men, who upon this night might have been seen strolling arm-in-arm along some of the darker and least frequented streets in the metropolis ; and yet, perhaps, they both partook in some degree of the two latter.

The taller and elder of the two might be from forty-five to fifty years of age ; but, whatever his years might be, he was evidently old in proportion to them. There was the undefinable air of a foreigner slightly clinging to him still ; but it was neither the lively eye of the Frenchman, nor the dark complexion of the Italian : his was rather of that fair though now faded hue which marks the more northern nations. His brow had some traces of care and anxiety, if

not of want and endurance ; yet his light blue eyes still occasionally gleamed with an expression that seemed to set suffering pretty much at defiance, not in sternness, but in recklessness. His dress was clerical, but had seen its better days.

His companion might have been some twenty years younger,—a dark, meagre, but good-looking Frenchman. He seemed but lately imported from the land of his forefathers ; indeed, from the tone of his conversation, his anxious inquiries into the customs, habits, and manners of the country in which he now found himself, and his probable chance of success therein, he seemed to be but just arrived.

“ And so you would counsel me to return to *la belle France*,” he said, addressing his companion, “ and seek for loaves and fishes there ? ”

The clergyman took snuff. “ *Ma foi, oui, mon ami*. The surgeon of a French regiment that fought so boldly against the Holy Alliance is not likely to have much success here. If you

found it difficult to get employment there at present, *here* you will find it impossible ; for these *bêtes* English not only hate Nap and his adherents with all the rancour of ultra-loyalists, but with the far more venomous hatred of inferior minds to a great and powerful rival. *Sacré !* if I thought some former passages in my life were forgotten, I don't know but I should myself return there too, even at this late hour, where I spent many a merry year ;" (his blue eye laughed and emitted a spark of hidden fire ;) "for, somehow, twenty or thirty years' residence in the fogs of England does not render one's French more fluent, especially to one not originally native ; and these d—d English are becoming so knowing upon our hands, that they set up to detect bad French, and to talk of *patois* and provincial accents."

"But *you*—*you*, Monsieur, the clever and the enlightened, and almost a Frenchman, what can *you* have to fear from fastidiousness itself?"

"Good sooth, my friend, a great deal: fa-

shions change in dialect as well as in other matters. I am *now* almost an Englishman : one's ears become brutalized by their guttural tones ever dinning into them ; and for cleverness and all that, I had only too much of it for the age in which I lived. Trust me, it is safer for a man to be a little behind than a great deal before his fellow-men : in the one case, they will turn to help him up ; in the other, they will conspire together to crush him down. I was obliged to hide my light under a bushel in this beef-eating, malt-drinking country. Bah ! their intellects are as heavy as their food, and I do believe their brains grow as fat as their paunches."

"And with such an opinion of them, why did you not leave them long ago?"

"*Pour des raisons, mon ami, pour des raisons !*" making a playful lunge with his forefinger at his companion's side. "*Sacré !* know you not that I used my brains a little too freely at one time in Paris, and found it convenient to make my bow?"

"I know but little of your history," replied the young man, "although your sister's son. She advised me, when our party got undermost, to fly to you, and seek my fortune under your protection in England. She told me nothing, save of your great genius, worth, and learning ; and so, *me voilà, monsieur !*" taking off his hat, with the bow peculiar to a Frenchman, which always seems to say "You see how polite I am !"

"Ah, poor Celine !" exclaimed the elder, "she ever thought partially of me. Well, well ; she would wonder at the world and despise it, if she saw me now. But we will not think of these things.—Will you take snuff?—Time was, indeed, when Frenchmen and foreigners of all sorts, either of the medical trade like yours, or the *maîtres de Français*, like me, were a rarity here, and during the war could only be gathered *en prisonniers*. But now — now *parbleu !* they are swarming like locusts : and, at this moment, a man *un peu passé*, like myself, is obliged to have

recourse to dyeing his hair, and gluing on a moustache, to prove he has not had time to forget, or—be forgotten. I sometimes think now of trying how far the knowledge I have acquired of English might serve my turn in France.”

“Have you still any friends remaining there?”

“Humph! why, I’m not so sure of that. There is one, indeed, who ought to be my friend in his prosperity, as only good luck saved him from being my companion in adversity. Had you asked me the question a month ago, I should certainly have answered *No!*—for to the many applications I felt myself justified in making to him for assistance, I never received any answer but silence, which in this case could scarcely be taken for consent. However, to my very great amazement, about three weeks ago, when I had given up all hopes, I received a letter from my friend and quondam pupil, assuring me of his deep interest in me, and adding, (doubtless *par hasard*,) that he wanted my assistance in procuring him lodgings in Lon-

don, whither he was coming immediately on some business which required equal despatch and secrecy. Hither he came indeed; but, save sharing my lodging, and giving me a share of his meals while he remained, I have as yet to take either his '*interest*' or '*principle*' upon trust—ha! ha! However, he is to be with me again in a few days; and as I have got a rein half-way at least over his neck at present, I may count so surely on some *douceur* as will enable me to give you some supper to-night. So, come along!——But, hey! *morbleu*! what's this?" he exclaimed, as they came within sight of his squalid dwelling; "A carriage at my humble door at this time of night! and four foaming horses! Surely it cannot be him returned already?—And yet—stop you here, my friend, a moment, until I run on and see; and should I enter the house, you must seek your supper elsewhere for this night—ha! ha!—but never droop for it. Here's my last sixpence, and come to breakfast with me to-morrow.

Hah ! *ma foi*, it is himself—I see him clearly now,” he continued, as he ran towards the door. “ And, in God’s name ! what is that large bundle he is lifting out ?—By this moonlight, it is a woman ! Then he actually has succeeded. Hey ! for better days !—*presto ! presto !*” and he arrived at his own door just as the unfortunate Gertrude was carried, in that deep and deadly slumber, into the house, and laid upon the miserable remains of a sofa which the room, called by courtesy a parlour, afforded, until a bed could be prepared for her.

De l’Espoir took the opportunity to confide to his former tutor, Edelstein, what had taken place. There was, as the reader is aware, that between them already, which enabled him not to shrink from reposing such confidence in him ; and yet, he did him injustice if he expected not to shock him. Edelstein was both grieved and shocked by the transaction, in the most favourable light in which De l’Espoir could place it ; but it was his feelings only that retained any tinge

of their original amiable tendency—his intellects and principles were alike withered and gone. De l'Espoir promised him competence if he should succeed in his undertaking, for his co-operation was necessary: Edelstein forbore all remonstrance, and agreed with him, that all that now remained, even for Gertrude's sake, was to make her his wife as speedily as possible.

“And this office you must perform for us, my friend.”

The tutor shrugged his shoulders. “It is so long since I practised, that I have forgotten my trade.”

“No matter; we will not be too critical. But a ceremony, however mutilated, must pass between us, or I shall never get her out of this d—d country; and if I did, she would raise a mutiny in the vessel, and have me thrown overboard *without benefit of clergy*, by way of retaliation.”

“Is the young lady so very pious, then?”

“Oh, she is just everything that will give us

trouble, I fear !” replied De l’Espoir, casting an anxious glance into futurity. “ Hang me ! if I know what to expect from her, after what I have seen of the violence of her feelings ; and since I dare not here attempt a legal marriage, all I can do is to marry her illegally, and keep that little deficiency a secret from her, until I shall have it in my power to make her the *amende honorable*.”

“ But suppose you change your mind, and never make it ? ”

“ My good Edelstein, men have changed in their love to woman, cooled in their hate to man, and forgotten even their thirst for vengeance ; but when were they known to change in their desire for wealth ? Wealth to the mind of man may be considered what the central gravity is to matter : other powers may weaken its effects and render them less strong in one person than in another ; but it is still the grand immutable principle of our nature ; and the proportion of those who resist it, are as the bodies which fly upwards, compared to those of the

opposite tendency. No, no ; this is a sweet and pretty girl, little as you can see of her now as she lies there wrapped up in my travelling-cloak : but, believe me, she is fair enough not to scare one from the possession of ten thousand a year, —that is, two hundred and fifty thousand livres of our money. Think of that, *mon ami* ! and talk of my cooling towards her !”

“ Think of it, you, my count ; and remember, that you can never touch a penny of it except by a prompt and legal marriage.”

De l'Espoir laughed a short contemptuous laugh. “ And, in good and sober truth, thinkest thou me such a hot-headed boy as to run the risk I have run with any other view ? When didst thou see me even in early youth yield to my passions beyond my control ?”

“ *C'est vrai, ce n'est que trop vrai !*” retorted the other, with quite as much contempt, but of another kind. De l'Espoir despised his softness, — he detested De l'Espoir's heartlessness.

But it suited neither of them to quarrel at present ; and the landlady here entering to carry away Gertrude to the room now hastily prepared for her, gave time for the angry feeling of the moment to subside.

The tutor resumed, as if the little digression had not been made,—“ But, granting that I can rake up from the old lumber-room of my brains sufficient prayers to suit our purpose, are you sure that she will not still rebel ; and if we force the golden ring upon her finger, in return slip a hempen one upon our necks ?”

De l'Espoir almost felt it upon his own already, and looked with a kind of envy at that of his friend, which made him not unwilling to bring it to the same level.

“ No,” he said ; “ I have no reason to think that the young lady hates me. We have hitherto been excellent friends ; and at the moment of her extremity she cast herself into my arms from her father and lover. To be sure, there was something at the moment that de-

clared that it was more from fear of them than love to me,—or rather, an appeal to me to explain matters for her, which in other circumstances I should have found it difficult to resist. But, be it as it may, I think I have now arguments enough to use, aided by her present circumstances, to induce her to submit quietly to become Countess de l'Espoir: her own large fortune I touch that minute, and show my gratitude to you; and I shall behave so prettily to her, that I dare say her father (who, *entre nous*, is nearly as young and twice as stout-looking a fellow as myself,) will add a few livres more to it in sheer thankfulness. But we must not lose an hour in getting out of this, for at this very moment there is a hue-and-cry after us."

"I wish to Heaven you were both safe out of this poor house at all events! But nothing can be settled until the young lady wakes from her lethargy: pray Heaven you have not drugged the dose too strongly!"

“Not a bit of it. You are a coward since that little accident in Paris; but I assure you I went exactly by your orders.”

The tutor shrank with some appearance of horror at the unfeeling allusion. “Ay, ever thus, ever the same—wishing to shift the burden off your own shoulders; but you fail to make me take it now. If you only did as I desired you, the young lady will wake again; if not, the blood be on your own head! And so, good night.” And they shook hands and parted with every appearance of cordiality.

No language, not even when assisted by her own fearful shudderings, and varying colour at the recollections of that dreadful moment, could succeed in conveying the faintest idea of the state of Gertrude’s mind when she awakened the next morning, raised her throbbing temples from her pillow, and looked about her upon a wretched room, still more wretchedly provided. It is almost trite to ask, who has not felt the deadly weight upon the heart, when one first

awakes after a few hours' oblivion of some recent calamity, before memory has had time to re-collect the scattered particulars?—yet there is no other way in which the reader can put himself even partially in poor Gertrude's place. Happily few, very few, have had to recall a calamity like hers.

On first awaking, she hastily sat up in her bed, pushed back the soiled and shabby curtains, then her own stray ringlets from before her eyes, in hopes of finding that all she saw was but the lingering of some hideous dream. It would not do, however : there was no delusion ; she was in some strange and frightful place. She looked on the sleeves of her night-dress ; they were not of the kind she was in the habit of wearing. She tore off her night-cap, and examined it to see if it corresponded in strangeness with all the rest :—alas ! but too fully !

She could not long remain forgetful of the event that had taken place through her instrumentality. On recalling it to her mind and

looking around her, her first idea was that she was in a prison ! A violent palpitation seized her, and threatened her with suffocation. She endeavoured to scream, but had not power ; and a train of nervous sensations, increased by the laudanum which De l'Espoir had compelled her to swallow almost at the moment he carried her from the arbour, succeeded each other so rapidly, that she sank back upon her pillow, almost believing that she had left the abode of men and was given up to demons.

She had lain in this pitiable state, despairing and heartbroken, about a quarter of an hour, when the opening of the room-door aroused her by bringing with it hope of relief. Again she started up, and to her utter amazement perceived the Count de l'Espoir coolly enter her chamber ! Covered with confusion, her first impulse was to conceal herself from his view, and, burying her head in the bedclothes, it was not until he had several times adjured her by everything solemn and serious to allow him

to converse with her for a moment, that she answered, "Then be so good as to retire until I dress and come to the drawing-room!"

"Nay, Gertrude, this is childish,—idle. You know, love, that you are mine now and for ever!"

The unfortunate girl forgot her confusion and every other feeling in these frightful words, and once more starting up, with burning cheek and flashing eyes she exclaimed, "Call my father! call my father instantly! or take me to him this moment—this very moment!" and she flung her arms wildly over her head.

De l'Espoir seized one of her hands, and falling on his knees beside her, implored of her to compose herself.

"But where am I? Tell me where I am!" she reiterated, breathing very rapidly. "Where am I? and why am I insulted by your presence in my chamber?"

"I shall retire, Gertrude, if you will promise

to compose yourself, and to allow me to speak rationally to you when you are dressed !”

“ Retire, at all events, if you please. Dressed ! Yes, I shall certainly dress ; but it will be to fly to my father and my betrothed husband,” she added, gaining courage from desperation. “ Leave me instantly, and let me get ready to set out !”

De l'Espoir suppressed a fiendish smile, and complied with her command to leave the room, but waited impatiently without until she had made her hasty toilette. The moment she opened her door to seek a sitting-room, he met her, and, taking her hand, implored of her to waive idle ceremony where everything was at stake ; and as the house they occupied did not afford a sitting-room,—it having been converted into a bed-room for him and Edelstein, who still occupied it,—to permit him to converse with her in the apartment she had just quitted.

Gertrude, seeing no alternative, was forced to comply ; but it was with an air of the most

haughty dignity that she re-entered the chamber, took her own seat upon the window, and, pointing to the only chair the room contained, intimated her permission to De l'Espoir to sit down also. In spite of his heartless effrontery, he was for an instant almost awed by this new feature in his youthful victim. It was but for a moment, however, that he could yield to so natural, so salutary a feeling. It not only passed away, but he determined to indemnify himself for its transitory existence, by humbling to the earth her who had occasioned it. He was prudent, however, even in his revenge, and resolved not to defeat himself by any such violent measures as should drive Gertrude to despair, unless he found that none others would succeed.

In this spirit, instead of accepting the seat so haughtily offered to him, he flung himself on his knees at Gertrude's feet, and, bemoaning "in good set phrase" the unhappy termination of *her* experiment, as he now took care especially to term it, he disclosed the story of his long and hopeless passion !

Gertrude heard him make this declaration with the most loathing indignation. At the mention of her brother's death she wept not and fainted not again. Her feelings were now wrought too highly, without one softening mixture, for either; and almost everything was merged in the horror and amazement of the situation in which she found herself. At the mention of De l'Espoir's passion a new light seemed to burst upon her mind, and she literally believed it a flash from hell, tinging with its lurid hue the whole deadly transaction. She heard him in perfect silence to the end: she felt too sick to speak; but the moment he paused, without the slightest comment upon all she had heard, she merely replied with calmness and decision, "Well! now be pleased to let me see my father."

De l'Espoir was absolutely disconcerted by her self-possession. He endeavoured to recall to her recollection, and with tenfold exaggeration, the indignation of her father and her lover.

"I know it,—I know it all," she answered

with the same apparent composure : "it is indeed all I remember since the one dreadful moment ; but I know likewise, that it is not possible that their indignation could outlive one moment,—it was only grief that made them mad. One word from my lips will set them right ; or, if not, death at their hands will be welcome. Take me to them instantly,—or rather, I shall go to them myself."

She rose and endeavoured to pass him. He seized both her hands, and gently but determinately replacing her upon her seat, he affected to struggle a good deal with his feelings before he could bring himself to intimate to her the exact position in which she now stood respecting the fatal experiment. At length, appearing to make an effort over himself, he said :—

"Gertrude, you know not how you stand with your father ; you know not how much circumstances are against you : you know little of the science with which you tampered ; but they will make it their business to inquire deeply into

it. Trust yourself to me ; you have not another friend : let me become legally so, and I will protect you against the world."

"Never ! so help me Heaven, never ! Release my hands this moment ! Oh, Godfrey ! Godfrey !—No ; rather would I drag out the remainder of my wretched life in the cell of the maniac, or sink at once into my grave, — than owe my existence to becoming your wife !"

"These are professions which all can make," replied De l'Espoir coldly, irritated by the aversion she evinced towards him, "but we see few who can stand the test ; especially—especially, mademoiselle, when their own consciences likewise stand up against them." And he looked on her with a sardonic smile, and eyes, the dark malignity of which nearly scared away the little remains of reason which she was struggling hard to retain ; and which the various agitations she had undergone, and the baneful drugs that had been administered to her, barely left her.

"What do you mean?" she asked, staring on him with amazement.

"Why, I simply mean this: that the very essence of animal magnetism is the *will* of the magnetizer; and that the effect is *never* injurious, or at least fatal, when his intention is pure."

Gertrude was still at a loss to understand him, and again asked what he meant.

"In two words, then, I mean, that I subjected you to too great a trial—too great a temptation. The advantages accruing to you from your brother's death were so great, that, unknown perhaps even to yourself,—at least certainly I believe unacknowledged,—*your will operated to his destruction!*"

By those whose lives have been spent in the world, where so many are ready to vilify our best intentions, and constantly to misunderstand them, and who have consequently learned the necessity of being satisfied with the *mens conscia recti*;—by the mathematician, who stifles

imagination with the weight of proof ;—or, by the hardened sinner, who has seared his conscience until it has lost all outward sign of sensibility ;—by each of these, and perhaps by many others, the villanous suggestion of De l'Espoir would have been treated with the contempt it merited. But, to the delicate mind, hitherto watched with tenderness and care ; to the young heart, taught to look to the approbation or displeasure of others for its rule of right, simply because others are severer critics than ourselves ; but, above all, to her whose nerves had been shattered and excited to the very utmost,—it sounded like the denunciation of an avenging God, through his minister of wrath !

She leaned back upon her seat with glaring eyes and quivering lips. Her mouth, throat, and tongue became dry and parched. She shut and opened her hands with a convulsive movement, in time to her gasping breath ; and having continued thus for the space of a minute, glaring on De l'Espoir, she fell heavily forwards. He

caught her in his arms, carried her to the bed, on which he laid her, and left the room in search of wine. She did not faint; and when he returned, and held some wine to her lips, she not only swallowed it, but eagerly drank off the remainder, perhaps hoping this time at least the draught he offered might do its work surely. She suffered her head to fall back upon the pillow; and as De l'Espoir anxiously leaned over to see if she had fainted, she suddenly burst into a loud and maniacal laugh, — it was the very voice of misery! it was absolute despair laughing at its own excess!

De l'Espoir's feelings at this moment were far from enviable. Already the doubt had come across him, even before quitting Beauton Park, whether he had not undertaken too desperate a game, and every hour was tending more than the last to convince him that he was mistaken in the tool he had chosen: that, meek, gentle, and complying as Gertrude seemed in ordinary intercourse, her feelings were

deep and fixed, and the very reverse of passive. Even now, when he had struck the last blow on which he depended for success, instead of the puny terror of conviction and of punishment which he had hoped would have led her to seek refuge in his arms, he saw only the deep workings of a morbid and excited conscience.

He contemplated her countenance and whole person contracted in misery before him, and for one moment the thought came across him to despatch her back to her family and make his escape. But then, could he hope that Gertrude would not betray him, and that they would not search him out from the uttermost ends of the earth for vengeance? He believed, indeed, that Vandeleur might pass it over, but the father—the father could not! And what would be the result? Either condign punishment, or at least the loss of the sort of ‘touch-and-go’ character which he had still contrived with some adroitness to preserve. His ruin were effected equally in either way; and would he then

consummate it?—would he, after having run all the risk, endured all the suffering and annoyance—would he now shrink from reaping the advantages which were already, he believed, within his reach, because there yet remained a few brambles to push aside? The thought was dismissed as soon as formed.

He turned once more to Gertrude, and endeavoured to take her hand in order to soothe her; but the shriek with which she snatched it from him, and the look of terror with which she examined it, as if it had been in the fangs of a wild beast, convinced him that to persevere farther at present were to drive her to actual insanity. Even he was almost struck with pity when he perceived that the last blow he had given was so deadly, that the poor victim, all wretched as she was, no longer presumed to ask to be taken to her father: but whatever effects such pity might have produced in other circumstances, in the present case he reminded himself that self-preservation was his paramount duty. He

determined to make Gertrude his by any means in his power, and then trust to circumstances for reconciling her to her fate.

With this view he sought Edelstein ; informed him frankly of Gertrude's repugnance to the match, and consulted with him what measures were the safest for him to pursue.

" I must leave England with as little delay as possible," he said ; " and in order to do so, should present myself for my passport instantly : but the lady should appear also ; and, in good sooth, she is in no state to do so, nor is it quite safe for me. Come, Edelstein, you who have been here so long and ought to know their ways, can you give me no assistance ?"

" Why, I do happen, not by being here so long, but by the chance of a family, of which the children had long been my pupils, going to the Continent, to know the routine of these matters, as I assisted them in such preparations. It is not absolutely necessary for the lady to appear, in ordinary cases, to procure a passport ; but,

perhaps the circumstance of a Frenchman carrying off an English wife might make them more particular. Lest it should be so, I'll tell you what you must do. Have you noticed our landlady's daughter who came in to prepare breakfast for us? Would she do at all to personate your fair one? You are aware the descriptions are always very liberal likenesses; in general, if the eyes, hair, and height do not absolutely contrast, it is enough."

"Why, in that case she might do; for I see she has dark hair and light eyes, like this poor girl. But then she must conceal her cherry-cheeks, and 'act the invalid to the very—*death*, I will say, instead of *life*; for I see Gertrude must be dosed again in order to be got on board."

"Indeed! Are matters so very bad? Think you not it is a desperate business, to say the least? Suppose she die on board?"

"The *least* said is the best," answered De l'Espoir with some irritation. "I cannot now

draw back if I would. She is in no state to return to her friends just now ; and wait here for her recovery I dare not, even were I the chicken-hearted fool you would make me ;—my own affairs all upset, my money-matters arranged for a long absence from Paris : do you think me mad, or are you doting yourself ?”

“ Neither, De l’Espoir. But the truth is this, that both for your sake and my own, I must insist upon your taking into consideration the chance of this girl dying of grief or terror, or both, when she wakes from her second dose and finds herself with you on the high seas. You will not call that success, and my reward will be forgotten.”

“ What the devil, then, is to be done ?” asked De l’Espoir, who knew that Edelstein had at least the right of might to give his opinion, for he had the power of betraying him ; “ what do you advise ?—or rather, in the name of common sense, what remains to be done ?”

A thought had entered the brain of Edelstein.

He was not naturally of a selfish character, but his difficulties had taught him to consider his own advantage before all things. Accordingly, his motives in the proposal he was now about to make were of a mixed nature. He truly felt for Gertrude's misery : even by De l'Espoir's own account he gathered that an affectionate young girl had been made the instrument of death to her brother, and was then to be carried abroad to a strange country, and forced to marry the man who had done this deed by her. The case was pitiable enough. Then if she died, he knew how little hold he should have upon De l'Espoir, whose promise indeed in that case would be null and void ; as, except some vague intimations of present gratuity, always seconded by 'the scarcity of present supplies,' his specific reward was to be contingent upon De l'Espoir's receiving the girl's fortune : but then, it was to be splendid in consideration of the delay.

Edelstein had long lost sight of all his own family connexions ; but when his sister's son

threw himself upon him for assistance and advice, however lightly he affected to treat the matter, the chord of nature still vibrated at his heart ; and he was ashamed and sorry that, with talents and some good feeling, he had not the means of serving him either by money or by interest : even his vanity was a little piqued when the young man frankly told all his mother had led him to expect.

When Edelstein first asked De l'Espoir what he proposed to do in the event of Gertrude's dying on the passage, his chief design was to suggest to him the idea of abandoning the project altogether. So far he was disinterested. But so lightly seated was the feeling, that the moment De l'Espoir asked " And what the devil can I do ?" the thought struck him, " Take a physician's opinion ;" and it required but one step farther to think that a physician to accompany them was just the thing required, and that his nephew Dumoulin, was just the person. From this moment he abandoned all thoughts

of dissuading De l'Espoir from the enterprise, and even determined to allow his taking the young man with him to go in part payment of the promised reward. He was the more delighted with this project, as De l'Espoir talked of going to America for some time, until he should have brought Gertrude into training, as he called it; and Edelstein knew that if Dumoulin could hope for success anywhere, it might be there: farther, he was especially well pleased to have a friend at court, to keep an eye on the financial department. All that now remained was how to break this matter to the count.

"Well," resumed the latter, as Edelstein remained meditating for some minutes,—“Well, what have you to suggest? for you are plotting something. I tell you, I am afraid to go to the office myself for a passport; for now that three days are well nigh gone by, if those people of hers are not more indifferent than I can believe flesh and blood to be, they will be lying in wait for me just where they know I must go. Could

you not get some friend to do this office for me? Have you never a dark, good-looking fellow in the circle of your acquaintance?" he asked jocularly, in hopes of dissipating the cloud he saw still deepening upon Edelstein's open brow: it would not do, however.

"I'll tell you what it is, *De l'Espoir*," he said; "I do not like this business. It would be easy for me to comply with your wishes. My own nephew, as dark and as good-looking as you are, is on the spot and at my command; but d—n me! (and that's an English oath which ought to mean a great deal,) if I like to have much more to do with this business. But, at all events, I tell you no passport is required to get from hence to America."

"Ay; but I told you I would not venture to take shipping here for America. *The dose* will take us safe to some French port, and from thence I can contrive to get in some friendly French vessel to America: but this girl's waking in a vessel commanded by an Eng-

lishman would, as I said before, be the signal for my being made food for fishes, if not for themselves. So, come, Edelstein, away with this coquetting: in two words, is this nephew of yours to be trusted?"

"In two words, then, I shall not try," said Edelstein, in his coldest and most determined manner; which was so much the more impressive, as it was foreign to his nature, and very rarely assumed.

De l'Espoir regarded him a moment with a look of deep and searching inquiry; apparently he came to some decision, for he totally altered his tone from the sort of cajolery he had adopted, and with a look and manner quite as determined as that of Edelstein, he said, "Hans Edelstein, you and I have known each other too long to quarrel now on a pretence of principle: in *one* word, then, since two did not suit you, what is your nephew's price?"

"In one word then, that you take him with you. Let him watch over this unfortunate

creature's health for both our sakes; for, I assure you, *I* can anticipate the possibility of her dying of the effects of all this. Let him try his fortune in the New World under the name of your travelling physician; and, in consideration of all this, and of a small sum of ready money now to myself, I will not exact the full amount of the sum I am to receive out of the girl's fortune. Think well before you decline this proposal; for though you may know my circumstances too well to think I could afford to forget self-interest altogether, yet believe me there is no worse friend for an unprincipled man, De l'Espoir, than one just a degree better than himself."

"By Heavens I believe it!" said De l'Espoir bitterly; "I believe what you mean, though I would put it in other words, and say there is no worse friend for a wise man than—a fool."

Edelstein, whose temper was imperturbable, coolly replied, "In the qualities which consti-

tute that latter character, don't forget—obstinacy.”

De l'Espoir ground his teeth ; but still the objections to quarrelling with Edelstein could not be ground away, and after a few minutes' moody silence to digest the surprise, he finally consented to the proposal. After all, Gertrude's preservation was or ought to be his own main object ; and the mere fact of spending a little more money when necessary, was not a misfortune that De l'Espoir, abstractedly, dreaded as much as some others might do.

The two friends, now apparently perfect friends again, were discussing the matter in very different moods from that in which it was first proposed, and had even advanced to chuckling and laughing heartily in anticipation of future success and enjoyment, when a slight rustling in the hall arrested their attention.

“ Are not the women both out ? ” asked De l'Espoir hastily.

"They are : I saw them out myself, and there is no one else in the house," answered Edelstein, astonished likewise at the noise.

"There is, by Heaven !" exclaimed De l'Espoir ; and, springing over the table, he rushed from the room, and discovered Gertrude softly endeavouring to open the hall-door ! She desisted the moment he approached, in hopeless terror ; and, without either of them uttering a word, she suffered him, without an attempt at resistance, to lead her into the room he had just quitted. The only sound that escaped her was such a sigh as might be called a *sobbing sigh*.

Nothing could be more heart-rending than her appearance. She was pale, cold, and subdued-looking. The unnatural excitement had exhausted itself ; and if she had not died from the reaction, she at least retained only such a semblance of life as might be imparted by an effect of galvanism : an occasional violent convulsive start, without any apparent cause, was not inconsistent with this.

Edelstein rose at her entrance ; and although it might be supposed that it was not possible to have presented her to a stranger's eye under more personal disadvantages than at the present moment ; yet such was the chiselled beauty of her features, the luxuriance of her bright hair, and the peculiar air of youth and innocence diffused over her whole person, that the German was struck with pity, admiration, and astonishment at the same moment, and remained standing in a kind of respectful embarrassment, feeling himself for the first time guilty towards her. She took not the smallest notice of him ; but when De l'Espoir brought a chair behind her and attempted to place her in it, she yielded to the movement and sat down. Her eyes had lost all expression, and she blinked and opened them repeatedly, as blind persons sometimes do.

De l'Espoir, instinctively feeling the effect produced on Edelstein, was at a loss how to address her. At last he asked, " Where were you going, mademoiselle ?"

"To my father," very faintly but distinctly.

"But he would not receive you."

"Perhaps not." Another sigh.

"And then?"

No answer. This question was beyond the present enfeebled state of her mind. De l'Espoir resumed.

"To your lover, perhaps?"

No answer still; but a momentary tinge upon her cheek showed that she understood him.

"But he too spurned you, Gertrude.—Gertrude, will you not speak? You have no friend in the world but myself," (the poor girl's teeth were heard to chatter;) "let me become your husband. This gentleman is a clergyman; he will unite our hands."

He knelt to take hers. She did not withdraw it, and only shut and opened her eyelids more rapidly. "Why do you not speak, my Gertrude?" he asked soothingly.

She muttered very low and very quickly in reply, "Because I am trying to keep myself composed, that I may not go mad."

De l'Espoir and his friend exchanged glances.

"But if you would suffer me to soothe you, Gertrude? if you would accept my affection—my caresses?" and he attempted to put his arm round her waist.

If the little animation Gertrude had hitherto exhibited through this scene might be attributed to a galvanic effect, or something at least of life without volition, the spring with which she now evaded the contamination of De l'Espoir's embrace might have given the idea that all the energy, and all the volition she had ever possessed, had been reserved for, and concentrated in that movement. She rushed to the door, but finding it locked, she looked over her shoulder for a moment inquiringly, though very wildly, into the stranger's countenance; and fancying she saw something like pity there, she flew towards

n, and catching him by the arm to support
r shaking frame, she said with a look and
ne that might have moved a stoic, "Take
ie to my father !"

Edelstein gazed upon her with infinite com-
assion. She immediately perceived it, and,
alling on her knees before him, she clasped her
arms round his, and in the softest accents of
ntreaty reiterated, "Do, ah ! do ; for the God
of mercy's sake, do !"

Nothing in grief or terror could be more
beautiful than Gertrude was at that moment.
A shawl, which she had wrapped about her for
her departure, had fallen off ; and as she still
wore the dress in which she had appeared at
dinner for the last time in her father's house, her
exquisite arms and neck were uncovered, except
where her hair now streamed about them : the
new excitement had tinged her pale cheek, and
her lips were slightly apart from the eagerness
of entreaty, and her head was thrown a little
back, and her lovely young face was turned up

towards him, with all her ardent soul struggling through it.

Edelstein was sensibly affected, and cast a look of appeal to De l'Espoir; but the armour of the latter rang of gold, and was not to be so easily melted. He could not indeed be blind to Gertrude's charms, but they served only to reconcile him once more to what he had almost begun to think was a hard bargain!

He feared to approach her, however; but making a sign to Edelstein, who seemed lost in pity and admiration, to raise and replace her on her chair, he assumed a colder and more determined manner than he had yet exhibited towards her, and informed her that this foolery must have an end; that his life was in danger, and that he could no longer be trifled with; in short, that unless she consented at once to become his wife, so as to stand between him and her father's resentment, he would never repeat

the offer, but carry her out of England within an hour.

“ And if I do consent ?” asked the poor girl, losing in a moment the tinge of colour which excitement had lent to her cheek, but at the same time innocently believing that De l’Espoir had at last betrayed unwarily the real motives for his wishing to marry her, and welcoming anything rather than his hateful love,—“ And if I do consent ?”

“ Oh, if you do, dear Gertrude,—why, if you do——”

She looked to Edelstein with eyes that asked an answer: his were carefully averted. She stood up, and seizing his arm, forced him to let his eyes meet hers. The momentary wish (or at least the hope) of softening De l’Espoir, which the poor girl had caught in them before, was vanished now, and had given place to unmixed compassion for an inevitable fate. At one glance she perceived the change: she breathed quickly for an instant—looked once

more at him—let go his arm—and, dropping her head upon her breast, sank into her chair, and seemed to give up all hope.

From that moment she became less and less collected. De l'Espoir perceived her critical state, and that no time was to be lost in consummating his villanous purpose. He repeated his desire for her consent to an immediate union.

“ And if I do ?” she replied again, but in a weak, almost imbecile, whining voice, and without raising her head.

He felt it was no time either to exasperate her feelings any farther, or to strain at trifles for himself. “ If you do,” he said unhesitatingly, “ I will take you back to your father.”

“ Indeed !” she exclaimed, now looking up ; “ how soon ?”

“ Oh, immediately.”

She pressed her hand on her brow. “ Then I think I will ; I think I ought,—at least, I believe so. God ! I am losing my senses !”

she shrieked out ;—and stood up hastily, turning deadly pale, but sank or rather fell into her seat again.

De l'Espoir flew to support her. She could not spring from him again, but she turned away, shrieking, "No—no—no! I say *you* are not to touch me. Mind your oath! Even if I die in your house, *your* hand must not close my eyes, or even bear my pall. Ha! ha ha! An auspicious wedding!—Wedding? Monster! fiend!" she said, her beautiful face for the first time in her life distorted with rage and hatred, "remember your oath! And if I do sell my hand from Godfrey, remember, you are that moment to take me to Herbert." She had exhausted herself, and she fell fainting into De l'Espoir's arms.

Edelstein was assiduous in his endeavours to revive her, and took occasion, while she lay senseless, once more to urge De l'Espoir to abandon the enterprise altogether, and to engage some woman, who knew nothing of the

circumstances, to take the wretched girl to her family.

De l'Espoir cast on him a look of mingled wrath and scorn. "I'll tell you what it is, Edelstein," he said ; "by the g— G— ! if you repeat this trash but once more, I shall take my own measures without your assistance. We are man to man here, and, by G— ! I will take your life, or let you have mine, unless you at once and without farther higgling perform the ceremony the moment she is capable of answering. Swear to me this moment," he said, suddenly letting go his hold of Gertrude, and seizing Edelstein by the throat, his eyes flashing fury almost to frenzy,—“swear to me, by whatever you hold sacred in heaven or hell, that you will second me like a man, and make your own fortune and mine, or I shall dash you to the earth, and crush you like a worm !”

De l'Espoir was an athletic man, and Edelstein the contrary. Had the latter until now even imagined himself his match, the first grip

of his hand would have convinced him of his error. He made no attempt at resistance, but betrayed not any alarm. He smiled with well-assumed calmness, and at once said, as he gently attempted to free himself from De l'Espoir, "Softly, my friend, softly: you are surely beside yourself. I swear to everything you wish. I'm sure I had motives enough to induce me to it before; but I now tell you, if that will satisfy you, that I will marry you to her whether she can speak or not. My soft moods don't last long; so, in God's name, let us to work. Remember, Dumoulin is yet to be spoken with, and the passports to be procured; and I would you were out of my house one and all."

De l'Espoir examined his countenance for a moment: he saw that he was perfectly sincere; the momentary gleam of virtuous compassion had again passed away. He released him from his grasp, and they again turned their attention upon Gertrude. •

In a few minutes she revived ; but, though she opened her eyes and looked around her on them both, she lay still and quiet as if from exhaustion. With the excitation, part of the confusion and bewilderment of her intellects had subsided also.

De l'Espoir wished to avail himself of the moment to have the ceremony performed. For this purpose he began once more in gentle and soothing accents to promise, that the moment it was completed he would carry her to her father. She was now sufficiently collected to see the absurdity of this promise, and accordingly, faintly, but most determinately, declared she never would consent to be married to him.

"Then you know the consequences, mademoiselle ?"

"No consequences can ensue so dreadful as that would be."

"Don't reduce me to the necessity of proving how vainly you flatter yourself in that."

"Do what you will, I never will be accessory to my own perdition here and hereafter. While I am free, there is still at least hope."

"Hope is proverbially a flatterer," replied De l'Espoir coolly. "It must be something more than hope that will enable your friends to find you out in the remote and distant country to which I shall instantly convey you, and hide you there for my own security."

The poor girl's breathing became evidently impeded by terror at this threat; but, thinking it her best plan to seem determined, she endeavoured to suppress all signs of emotion. Alas! could she deceive such interested observers?

"Then it must be done, and without farther trifling or delay," said De l'Espoir, addressing his friend; and added, as if in pursuance of a preconcerted plan, "Edelstein, call up that coach which is waiting for us: and you, madam, excuse the violence to which you compel me;" and so saying, he seized Gertrude's shawl, which

lay on a chair, and throwing it over her head, prepared to fasten it so as to prevent her calling for assistance.

The bait took. The unhappy girl, in spite of her previous exhaustion, sprang up, and made convulsive and frantic efforts to free herself; calling out at the same time, "Spare me ! save me ! I consent to everything if you will take me to my father !" De l'Espoir, whose only object was to frighten her, no sooner heard these words, than he suffered her to succeed in throwing the shawl from her head. Such was the effect upon her nerves, that she gasped fearfully, as if already half-suffocated. The wild and heart-rending excitement returned, and in a few minutes she was little better than a maniac.

To conceive Gertrude's situation at this moment, it is necessary to recall all that she had suffered in mind and body for the last two days. Food had never crossed her lips, and her only drinks were those best calculated to excite and

bewilder her intellects. It may be, that many women, in similar circumstances, would have had presence of mind to remain quiet and collected, until some opportunity should offer for claiming protection from the laws of her country, or the compassion of her fellow-creatures; but the young and innocent girl, hitherto watched and tended, if not with fondest solicitude, at least in such a way as to render the idea of danger or of suffering like the visions of a dream, or the tale of a romance — something, in short, which never could come near to *her*—was wholly unprepared for it when it did come, and could neither judge of its extent or remedy. She was far from deficient either in moral courage or in physical endurance; but her mind and strength together undermined, she lost all guidance of herself. She neither knew where she was, nor what had brought her there. She had as yet beheld no living being but her evil genius and his colleague; and when she could think at all, she very naturally thought either that her father

and lover had abandoned her to her fate, or else that she was spirited away somewhere beyond their reach. There was nothing in this world, or in the next, that she dreaded so much as De l'Espoir's love ; and probably, had he continued in that strain, she would even have suffered herself to be carried abroad and buried alive, rather than have consented to marry him. But when he artfully gave as a reason for his pressing the suit, that she might prove a shield between him and her father's resentment, she thought it better even to incapacitate herself from ever becoming the wife of the man she loved, than continue in the power of him she feared and hated, even by suffering the ceremony of marriage to pass between her and that dreaded one. In short, she now grasped at the proposal, as a drowning wretch will, when terror has bewildered his judgment, relax his own useful and rational efforts, to seize the outstretched hand of the enemy who has pushed him into the whirlpool.

De l'Espoir hastened to avail himself of the success of his plan, ere the paroxysm of terror had again time to subside. He made a sign to Edelstein to approach; and, taking Gertrude's hand, intimated to her that the ceremony was about to commence. A fearful shiver ran through her. "Down! down on your knees then!" she said very wildly, "and swear you will take me to my father instantly!"

De l'Espoir indulged her by going through the form she prescribed, and then rose to go through that he considered much more important. He placed himself by Gertrude's side, while she, with glaring eyes, and hair dashed back from either temple alternately, as if to cool them, rapidly repeated the words Edelstein dictated to her from an old prayer-book of his landlady's, but concluded every sentence with the words "in order to be taken to my father;" as if by adding that clause she could either ensure the fulfilment of his vow, or invalidate her own.

The ceremony proceeded, however, without farther interruption than these words, until De l'Espoir attempted to place his own ring upon her finger. She struggled against it for an instant; but, as he succeeded, she shrieked aloud, "Oh, Godfrey ! Godfrey !" and relapsed again into a second fainting fit.

Here was another chasm in her narrative to the duchess. From that moment she had not the faintest recollection of any circumstance that befel her until she recovered her senses six months afterwards in the city of New York.

CHAPTER XX.

That fatal vow, howe'er so rashly given,
Is calmly, deeply registered in heaven.
Nor all the tears that breaking hearts can weep
Avail that page in Lethean drops to steep :
All other woes some remedy may claim,
Save that whose only cure were guilt and shame !

ANONYMOUS.

DUMOULIN, the nephew of Edelstein, was but too happy to accept the offer that was made to him to accompany the Count de l'Espoir and his lady to America. Enough of the story was confided to him, by De l'Espoir's consent, to explain the circumstances that could not be concealed ; and the young man was too wary to pretend that he suspected more.

De l'Espoir succeeded, with his assistance, in procuring passports for himself, his invalid wife, and travelling physician, in a vessel going to

France, and from thence he found no difficulty in embarking for America. The state into which Gertrude had now fallen favoured his schemes to the utmost of his wishes. Instead of the wild vehemence that had hitherto characterised her despair, she revived from the last fainting fit only to a state of listless and silent exhaustion ; there was no farther occasion to excite her nerves, and therefore she was suffered to remain almost in the stillness of death. Food was offered to her, but she neither accepted nor rejected it, or seemed indeed conscious for what purpose it was offered. De l'Espoir was content ; he saw at once, that while she continued in this quiescent state there would be no difficulty in having her conveyed on board.

When, however, the rest of that day and another night passed over without her seeming to wish for food, or attempting even to utter a word, he became alarmed for her life, and hastened to procure for her such delicacies as he thought might tempt her appetite.

He need not have been so fastidious then ; the unfortunate girl, all deranged as she was by the excess of her sufferings, had yet begun to feel the pangs of hunger, and these increased in proportion as the excitement of her nerves subsided. When De l'Espoir himself brought food to her bedside, though too weak to raise her own hand to her lips, she even greedily devoured that which he presented to her. She was, however, too far gone for it to do more than support life : either reason, or all power of exerting it, was fled ; and she continued to lie in a state remarkably like that into which her poor brother was thrown by the fatal accident which first led to all the misery that had ensued.

In this state she was carried on board, unresisting, and probably unconscious of the circumstance. Her bodily organs were, however, unimpaired ; and under the kind and judicious treatment of her young physician, who became deeply interested in one so lovely and so gentle, the exhaustion was soon removed by suitable

nourishment and medicines. But, alas ! it was in vain he watched for the return of her reason. Probably the strange and alarming circumstances of finding herself in a ship at sea, surrounded only by strangers and her cruel persecutor, had confirmed the temporary alienation. However this may be, by the time they arrived in the New World, she was a wild and raving maniac.

Nothing could exceed De l'Espoir's despair, when week after week passed over, and neither Dumoulin nor any other medical man whom he consulted gave him assurance of any amendment. He tried every remedy, however expensive, which held out to him the slightest hope ; and himself treated Gertrude for some time with the soothing tenderness that was pronounced to be essential for her.

At length, just as De l'Espoir's patience was well nigh exhausted, whether it was owing to the influence of a clear American winter, or whether it was only now that the system

that had been pursued with her began to take effect, a sudden improvement became evident in Gertrude's disorder, and from the moment that it appeared to yield at all, her recovery proceeded with a rapidity which could only have been the result of her youth, and hitherto perfect health.

As it was at this point that she was enabled to continue her narrative to the duchess, we shall again have recourse to her own expressions.

“And, oh, God! oh, God!” she exclaimed, after mentioning the first perfectly lucid interval that she recollected, “there need have been no place of punishment created for the wicked if all could suffer here what I suffered then! One thing after another began to strike me as strange; and I was near relapsing into madness from very amazement on recovering from it. God! when I first heard myself familiarly addressed as Madame Lapin—for he had again changed his name—and found myself considered as the wife of the Count De l'Espoir,—oh! I could madden again

over the recollection of that hour!—And yet it was nothing, absolutely nothing to that which succeeded. I had some faint glimmering remembrance of a frightful ceremony which had been forced upon me; but now, in my recovered senses, I made known my determination not to abide by it—to have its legality at least disputed. Alas! alas! why did I betray my intentions ere I had recovered sufficient strength of mind to resist the consequences which the disclosure of them brought upon me! But I knew not my own lingering weakness until it was too late, and I am lost for ever!”

Here she burst into agonizing sobs; and the duchess tenderly soothing her, and mingling her tears with hers, besought her to be comforted, and to mention what the consequences were to which she alluded, for that as yet nothing had appeared to prevent her sham marriage from being set aside.

“Alas! alas! no; it cannot, cannot be!” she sobbed out. “Oh! duchess, I can scarcely bring

myself to tell you what ensued. Forget, oh ! do, dearest, kindest lady,—forget the artificial differences between us ; let me treat you really as a dear friend,” she said, with imploring eyes, “ or I shall break my heart, or go mad again.”

The duchess was deeply affected, and threw her arms around her. Gertrude pressed her to her heart, and laying her head upon her shoulder sobbed forth, “ Oh ! duchess, *he, he*—the cruel one, the monster, told me that our marriage, if not strictly binding by the laws of England, was solemnized in the eyes of God by a real clergyman ; and whispered me,—oh ! duchess, that—that I should only bring down eternal infamy on a being—that was yet unborn, by any attempt to invalidate the ceremony !” She buried her face yet deeper in the duchess’s bosom, and the burning of her temples penetrated through its covering.

After a short pause she resumed. “ Ah ! how is it that people can ever expect that language, composed when the mind is at ease and the feel-

ings at rest, can convey any idea of the misery of which the human heart is susceptible ! I cannot believe that there ever was a feeling, experienced by another, to equal the horror of mine at that moment : I really do believe, that had it been less dreadful, less overpowering, less maddening, I should have better resisted the proposal with which he followed it up — namely, the having our marriage solemnized over again ; giving as a reason for this, to any one who should necessarily be informed of the circumstance, that we had previously been married by a clergyman of one persuasion only, and that as his and mine differed, we were anxious to have the ceremony repeated. Let it show you the state of sullen despair into which his communication had thrown me in the shattered state of my mind, when I tell you that I even eagerly caught at this, and we were formally married that evening !”

The duchess with difficulty restrained a scream of horror at this irrevocable step ; but Gertrude felt her involuntary start.

“Ay, it is but too true !” she cried ; “ I was still half a maniac, at least utterly weakened in judgment ; and lost, as I believed myself to be, I saw no object in rejecting the proposal. But, oh, God ! had I been as I am now, I might have known that it was all a deep and dreadful falsehood. Yes, yes ! that has been spared to me !—it was all a deep and dreadful falsehood ! I never relapsed again into absolute insanity ; but the sight of my cruel persecutor, together with all the returning recollections which his presence so forcibly recalled, for sometime had such an effect upon me, that my physicians feared confirmed convulsions or death from it, and I was released from his visits until my health was perfectly restored. He was unaffectedly delighted at this, as it seemed to promise him the harvest for which he had so hardly laboured, and which I, fool that I was ! never even thought of, until he began to hint about my writing to my father, and seconding him in his claims for my fortune. This I positively refused to do. To

betray over to the punishment he had deserved the man to whom I had, however madly, given my marriage vows, was what I certainly never could think of doing ; but, on the other hand, to suffer either my father or Godfrey to believe that I had voluntarily become his wife, would be, I felt, a crime of scarce a lighter dye. He saw that he had no chance of prevailing with me : for some time he grew sullen, and even cruel in his treatment of me ; but seeing this had no other effect than to threaten a relapse into my mental disorder, he changed his plan once more, and endeavoured to prevail upon me to enter into society. This was scarcely practicable where we were ; and at all events nothing could have induced me to appear in public, where I knew I must long have been in private the object of curiosity and conjecture, if not of pity or suspicion. The count wished to return to Europe, but still was not anxious to present himself anywhere that he had been already known, until he should have come to some terms with my poor

father, and, I believe, until he could feel more confidence in me. There was at this time occasionally visiting at our house a gentleman, who was shortly going in an official character to St. Petersburg, and who, having taken a great fancy for M. Dumoulin, my physician, in consequence of an accidental, but essential medical service, which he had had an opportunity of rendering him, was endeavouring to prevail upon him to accompany him thither, where all foreigners of talent were at that time welcomed by its enlightened emperor, and were almost certain of encouragement, whatever might be their profession. As I was now tolerably recovered, and as poor Dumoulin, falling under the general odium which I suspect attached to us all at New York, had not at all succeeded with the public there, nothing deterred him from at once availing himself of this proposal but the fear of letting De l'Espoir out of his sight until he should have fulfilled the engagement to his uncle, of which

I had acquired some intimation, I could scarcely tell how, but chiefly I think from De l'Es-poir himself when urging me to apply to my father for money. In the course of conversation on the subject, this gentleman happened to mention that the Duke of Castle-ton was the English ambassador there, and that the duchess was rendering the place a paradise by her graces and amiability. The name fell like manna upon my heart : I thought of Godfrey's friends, of Godfrey's mother perhaps, being there ; and to one so long an out-cast from all that were ever dear, and almost hopeless of ever seeing any one of them again,—indeed, not daring to wish it,—this information seemed like a message from Heaven, to tell me whither to direct my weary steps with the hope of rest. Oh ! the blessed feeling that I should once again be within the reach of a real friend—for such I knew that any friends of his must prove to me. I was now grown wiser by sad experience, and did not give the count my reasons for

petitioning to be taken to St. Petersburg, but suffered him to imagine that it was partly the dread of being separated from my kind and skilful physician, partly the caprice of lingering illness. Happily for me, he was not only at the moment at a loss where to take me to, but was desirous to gratify me in every point, in the hope of winning me at last to suffer an appeal to my father, without betraying the treatment I had suffered. I confess I now allowed him to indulge in this hope, so far as accepting the kindness that I knew flowed only from it, and here in the course of time we arrived. M. Dumoulin having preceded us as travelling physician to his new friend. On our arrival, the first news that greeted us was the death of my poor father, which was announced in very particular terms in some French newspapers which the count procured,—at least such was the account he then gave me of the manner in which the news reached him ; but I have had reason since to believe that he knew it some time before,

but, previous to asserting his right to my father's property, was desirous, by kindness and indulgence, to win me over to conceal all that he had been guilty of; for he was too unprincipled himself to trust to my principles, unless seconded by my feelings; and I believe that latterly, even when trying to prevail on me to write to my father, he knew of his death, but made that a sort of test of how far I might be trusted; for now that such wealth seemed within his grasp, he became very desirous to preserve his character, by hushing up the means by which he procured it. The news of my poor father's death affected me dreadfully: as usual, I traced this new affliction to myself; and but that I fancied I recognised Godfrey's spirit hovering over me in the particularity of the advertisement, I should in despair have believed that he also was no more, and that I was indeed alone on earth. I became very unwell, but without any return of my mental malady; and, by way of diverting my mind, the count prevailed upon me to accompany

him to the theatre, where I was found by Vandeleur. There certainly is a fate in everything ; for you may imagine with what reluctance I agreed to appear in public, and so soon after the news of my father's death : though, indeed, on that objection I dwelt but little ; for where all was darkness within already, the form of not going into a crowd had but little weight with me. You already know the recognition which took place there, and all that ensued in consequence. On our first arrival the count had, with the assistance of M. Dumoulin, caused my wardrobe to be fashionably replenished, and gave me the trinkets he had brought to England when under the disguise of a jeweller, and which I really now believe he even then intended for a wedding present, and hoped that the sight of them would help to reconcile me to my fate. Here they are, decking me now, dearest lady ; and to cheat your servants into admitting me to your presence this evening, is the first purpose to which they have been dedicated. May I, O

may I hope that it has not been a fruitless one?"

The duchess once more embraced her, and assured her of her warmest sympathy. "But tell me," she said, "why you did not sooner address yourself to me, or to Mrs. Vandeleur, since you thought she was with me?"

"Alas!" said Gertrude, "you do not know how different it is for the sick heart at a distance to wish for an indulgence, and when it is near, for the scrupulous conscience to avail itself of it. To be near Godfrey's mother seemed a sufficient reason for my coming to St. Petersburg; yet, arrived there, I asked myself if it were not a feeling to be checked, and, at all events, I determined to postpone the gratification of it until it should become either absolutely necessary or irresistible; for, alas! alas! where there is not the shield of love, a woman who would be virtuous must be very self-denying: the indulgence that is safe with that shield, is guilt without it." She paused.

"You are an estimable, amiable creature," said the duchess enthusiastically; and added, "and you loved Godfrey very dearly?"

"Loved him! I loved him with all my heart's first affections, and I never could have learned to love another. Nor is this romance. I believe it is only when the first object is delusive, and disappoints our fancies of perfection, that we change our sentiments towards it, or can turn them to another. If the heart and mind have once been wholly filled, no other can ever get entrance there; it is only when some little corner is left unsatisfied, that something or some one else creeps in, and in time shoves out the first occupant: and this is so often the case, that exceptions are called romances."

"But all think their own case an exception while they love."

"I even doubt that. They endeavour to persuade themselves, and still more to persuade others, that such is the case; but I believe those are persons who are more enamoured of the pas-

sion than of the object—those, in short, who were predetermined to fall in love.”

“ You seem to have studied the subject deeply,” said the duchess, smiling. “ And does Godfrey love you as truly ?”

“ As truly, I believe he does, but not exactly in the same way. Godfrey loved before ; and I can never believe that any love can be like a first love.”

Gertrude was astonished at the vivid blush that suddenly suffused the duchess’s fine features, and was startled to feel her hand loosen its grasp of hers. She feared she had touched some painful chord, though distant was any surmise she formed from the truth ; she hastened to remove any pain she might have given. “ I may be mistaken, however,” she said ; “ minds are differently constituted ; and, indeed, I do believe that Godfrey loved me as much as ever man loved woman : but this I must think of first love,—while time and circumstances may wear out any other love,

and even turn it to hatred, there is something that clings to the person who has first wakened your soul to its own delicious powers, that invests him or her with a sacred interest — a communion as it were with oneself, that, while that self continues, can never be entirely obliterated. In after loves, we look for gratitude in return for the compliment we pay ; in first love, we are thankful for the blessing of being taught to love ; and though we may never acknowledge it to the world, and scarcely to ourselves, yet we feel a bond of union for that blessing between us and the object, not wholly distinct from that of a child to a parent, and often, I believe, as pure and holy. In short, a second love, if unfortunate, may be repented of ; I do not believe a first ever was."

"With your ideas of first love," said the duchess, "I should be sorry my husband or lover had experienced it before."

"Godfrey is neither husband nor lover to me now : when he was one, and almost the other, I scarcely regretted it. I have said minds are dif-

ferently constituted : I know the uprightness and truth of Godfrey's heart and principles ; and he has often told me that the object of his first love was so unlike me in every respect, that his affection for one and for the other never came even to a comparison in his mind."

The duchess stole a glance at the countenance of her who thus uttered words so immediately concerning herself ; but it was open and unconscious, as her voice was unembarrassed.

"Then you have conversed upon this subject ?" asked the latter.

"Often. I don't think he disliked it, nor did I : the lady seems to have been one of those superior creatures that he was proud to have loved even when the passion had passed away for ever."

"You have no idea who the lady was?" the duchess at last ventured to ask in a low and timid tone, with eyes irresistibly fastened on the ground.

"No. He once begged me not to ask, and I never repeated the inquiry."

"But were you not afraid of meeting her in society?"

"Afraid!—I should be delighted. I love her already for his sake, and I am sure I should immediately love her for her own."

Gertrude was now as much surprised by the sudden embrace of the duchess, as she was before by her withdrawing her hand.

"You are indeed an amiable creature," she said once more, as if to account for the movement; "but we must now think about this very serious business. Not a doubt remains upon my mind but that it is my duty as well as inclination to protect you; but yet, so delicate is the matter, that I must not involve the Duke of Castleton in it. This renders my part difficult. In our own England, indeed, I could easily manage it all for you; but here I am intimately acquainted with so few. However, we shall see. In the mean time, day dawns; and as my intellects will be infinitely clearer after a few hours' repose,

for your sake as well as my own I shall seek it : I recommend—nay, I command you to do the same. Look here,” she said, drawing aside a blue satin drapery, and discovering a fairy couch ; “consider yourself the most favoured of mortals, when I tell you that you may take possession of that bed to-night.”

So saying, she bade her a kind good-night, and disappeared.

Gertrude at first felt so soothed, so happy, so safe as it were, to be once more in confidence with any one, that, notwithstanding all the causes she had for anxiety and alarm, she believed it would be only necessary to throw herself upon the luxurious-looking couch, to sink into a profound slumber. Such was not the case, however : the excitement and agitation she had suffered, had taken too much hold upon her nerves to be so easily hushed because her reason was in some measure satisfied ; and she had only had fitful snatches of sleep for about an hour, when her kind and benevolent hostess

appeared again in her chamber, in such morning costume as was calculated for driving out to pay visits or take the air. Without waiting for expressions either of surprise or gratitude on the part of Gertrude, she told her she must rise without delay, swallow the cup of aromatic coffee that stood ready for her on the table, and wrapping herself in a large mantle and close bonnet which the duchess herself brought to the dressing-room, follow her softly and quickly to the carriage which waited for them at the entrance.

“Ask me no questions, dear creature,” she continued, “but do as I command you, for I am like a thief endeavouring to escape with my prize before the proprietor returns. The duke is luckily gone out for an hour, and we must avail ourselves of his absence to fly, as he must by no means be involved in my quixotism, seeing that such an adventure would but ill become the representative of English government.”

So saying, she hurried through the pompous

edifice which called her mistress for the time, and having placed herself and Gertrude in the carriage, she gave her orders to the servants in so low a tone that Gertrude not only could not catch the sounds, but almost fancied that it was purposely intended she should not.

This, for a few minutes, was sufficient to prevent her asking any questions, and the duchess seemed glad of the excuse to avoid speaking also ; but when Gertrude perceived, that instead of driving to any remote part of the city—or, as she once or twice hoped, in spite of her better reason, to her own hotel, to make inquiries respecting Vandeleur,—when, instead of this, she perceived that they were not only leaving St. Petersburg behind them, but continuing to drive at a steady pace farther and farther into the country, her excitement and alarm became too overpowering for delicacy, and she could not prevent herself from exclaiming in a palpitating voice, “Where are we going, dear kind duchess?”

“Going? where are we going?” repeated the duchess, starting from a fit of anxious abstraction. “Why, I scarcely know if I should tell you yet. Let me see: one suspense I can remove, —we are *not* going to your house. I feared even to send to inquire for your poor friend, lest you might be traced; and, after all, it could have done no good. You are quite sure he is well cared for?”

“Oh yes; I believe all danger was over before I left home. Yet I should have been glad—but I am sure you are right in all you do, and that the greatest prudence is necessary for every one’s sake, as well as my own, and I will not ask another question.”

The duchess smiled a faint and absent smile. She looked pale and anxious; and as the carriage drove rapidly on, she frequently put her head quickly out, then drew back, relieved as it were by a momentary respite.

Presently, however, the road, and the whole face of the country they drove through, began to

assume an appearance that could not pass unnoticed by any one. Even Gertrude, all wretched and anxious as she was, was attracted by it; and although she adhered firmly to her promise not to ask another question, her eyes drank in with amazement the magnificence of the grounds through which they were now driving.

The duchess perceived it.

“ It would be useless, I see, as well as cruel, to endeavour to keep you longer in ignorance of whither I am conducting you. I am going to Tzarsco-Celo, to throw you upon the protection of the empress-mother, and to endeavour to interest her in your favour.”

Poor Gertrude started and changed colour at this very unexpected intelligence. The duchess smiled.

“ Yes, it certainly is an adventure, and will probably be a trying scene for us both. I ought to endeavour to support your spirits, and give you some hints how to conduct yourself; but, in very truth, I am unable. I am myself con-

siderably agitated; for I am taking a step that *may* give offence, and in that case may prove injurious where I wish to serve."

"But in that case it may also prove injurious to yourself. Oh! do not—do not, I beseech you, suffer me to spread my baneful influence any farther! Heaven knows, it has been wide-spreading enough!"

"To myself it can bring no injury, and the duke must not be involved in it. If I can interest Maria Feodorowna in your behalf, you must submit blindfolded to her guidance. You must, my poor unhappy friend, leave St. Petersburg, leave Russia, at a moment's notice, if she procure you the means, or advise the measure."

Gertrude of course could only promise to be implicitly guided by her who had so kindly interested herself in her behalf; and, clasping her hands tightly together, she lay back in silence in the carriage.

We shall take the opportunity, as they drive

along, to acquaint our readers with the reasons which prompted the duchess to a measure apparently so hazardous. In the first place, the mere circumstance of a measure being hazardous, if it was one that ought to be embraced, was so far from deterring the Duchess of Castleton from attempting it, that the energy of her character, and the unflinching purity and uprightness of her principles, rather led her to seek that most which others were likely to shun. In the mere common course of charity and benevolence, though contributing nobly according to her noble means, she was so far from rendering herself conspicuous, that it might have been almost supposed she was lukewarm. Of the popular subscription which was sure to have many advocates, she never was the patroness, nor did she expend her wit or her smiles behind the tables of a bazaar; but where there was a bruised spirit to be healed, which but for her had broken, or where the good to be performed was invested with a degree of trouble and

annoyance, from which people in general were glad to turn to some gentler ministration, there was the sphere the Duchess of Castleton had chosen for herself. To do the good that others would have done, she felt to be almost selfishness, and considered it to be only useful and acceptable to do that which but for her were left undone ; in short, she did not believe that the great and beneficent Creator of the universe made some of his creatures miserable, for the purpose of affording others an opportunity of laying up a certain quantity of merit by relieving them. No : she believed that God made all nature perfect ; that man disfigured it ;—and that for each to do all the good in his power now, and to prevent all the wrong, was a general concern in which each was alike involved, if not hereafter, at least certainly in this life, as we had all fallen under one general curse ; and that therefore for each to run separately to the easiest task, merely for the sake of saying, “ I have done my share,” were as if the children of

one father were all to rush in to cultivate the fruits or flowers of the garden, and refuse to assist in the rougher but more necessary labour of the field.

With principles such as these, and with a mind that never for a moment suffered itself to dwell on the possible disunion of principle and conduct, the quantity of real good she had contrived to do, even in her short career, was astonishing, and she moved along in her noble consciousness of all things being possible to the willing mind, blest and blessing ! Yes, she was blest herself ; for, although there might have been moments, as clouds will pass over the sun, when she thought of more selfish happiness that once seemed within her grasp, most assuredly she far more frequently clasped her hands and bent her knee in gratitude, for having been enabled to listen to the advice of her inestimable governess, and having thereby established a command over her own mind and feelings, which turned all her thoughts into a

holier, more diffusive channel, and secured her in a situation that enabled her to fulfil her most extensive schemes for the happiness of her fellow-creatures. Even he for whom she could once have cheerfully resigned and forgotten these high aspirations—even he was now placed within her power to serve ; and she felt a thankfulness which she did not fear to offer to the throne of Grace, for being permitted to do so in the way most congenial and acceptable to her delicate feelings and upright principles ;— even through the medium of one who had succeeded her in his affections. There was perhaps but one particle of the leaven of human frailty that mingled in the benevolent schemes or undertakings of the Duchess of Castleton ; and that was pride :—not a low or an ostentatious pride ; but the pride that shrank from putting herself under a compliment to others for their co-operation or assistance ; and she conscientiously believed that if merit could at all attach to anything of the kind, it was to those who dis-

dained not to become beggars for the beggars. Sometimes, when particularly assailed by this many-headed monster, she would make it a point of duty to overcome it, if it stood much in the way of the object she meant to serve ; but she was better pleased when she could make to herself a satisfactory excuse for following its dictates.

Such was the case with respect to the matter she had in hand at present. In England she could scarcely have persuaded herself that sufficient reason existed for her not confiding Gertrude's secret to some friend, or some dependant, through whose means, with perhaps a little risk, she could have either been permanently concealed, or enabled to fly the country : but in St. Petersburg, she told herself that on none had she sufficient claims to authorise her involving any one in her romantic undertaking ; especially while she occupied her present official position, if we call it so ; and, in short, that the only course open to

her to pursue with any propriety, was that which she now adopted, — to throw herself and her *protégée* upon the kindness of the empress-mother, whose elevated situation, while it shielded *her* from any risk in the responsibility, was such, that the Duchess of Castleton herself could not shrink from accepting or even requesting a favour at her hands.

To this she was also particularly encouraged by the character of the empress-mother. The court of Russia is encumbered with much pomp and ceremonial, and is generally considered very difficult of access to strangers ; but such is not the native taste of its imperial family, however they may yield to the dictates of policy ; and, from the time of their great Peter, down to the present, they generally have had some cottage or *ferme ornée*, to which they retired at intervals from all the pomp and circumstance of royalty, to remember that they were mortals, and to conduct themselves as such. But even if this were not the case, what pomp or what

ceremonial would not recede before the dignified elegance of the Duchess of Castleton? or what fastidiousness not feel honoured by her intimacy?

With the empress-mother in particular, she was an especial favourite: for that shrewd and intelligent princess,—whose soul was bent on improving the moral and intellectual condition of her people, and whose highest energies were put forth in founding schools and establishments of various descriptions, that might in time elevate that people to the standard of the nations that surrounded them—so inferior in extent, yet so surpassing in cultivation, that Russia might be compared to an uncut diamond surrounded by polished brilliants;—a princess whose thoughts, time, and revenue were devoted to objects so ennobling,—could not long be blind to the judicious hints and advantageous suggestions to be derived from one of the finest specimens of one of the finest nations in the world. The Duchess of Castleton, again, liberal-minded, and ready to

hail sense and benevolence wherever she met them, failed not to appreciate these leading traits in one labouring under, but struggling to overcome, the disadvantages that beset Maria Feodorowna. Hence, despite many little circumstances that might not have been agreeable to her in another, there grew between them an intimacy that perhaps deserved the name of friendship as much as many other *liaisons* that assume it without question. Concerning her establishments for the education of young females, Maria Feodorowna was particularly anxious; and so often had the Duchess of Castleton accompanied her in her visits of inspection to them, and so many conversations had they held upon the subject, in which the benevolent and maternal feelings of the empress were expressed with the energy peculiar to her, that the duchess persuaded herself that she could not fail in her endeavours to excite her interest in behalf of one so artless, so innocent, and yet so miserable as Gertrude.

Indulging in these hopes, she had recovered tolerable spirits when, according to directions previously given, the carriage stopped at a short distance from the splendid palace of Tzareco-Celo ; where the empress-mother happened to be staying at the time, and which had originally been a love-gift from the Empress Catherine to her august spouse.

CHAPTER XXI.

The lady strange made answer meet,
And her voice was faint and sweet :
" Have pity on my sore distress,—
I scarce can speak for weariness."

Christabel.

ALTHOUGH it was not without mature consideration of the risk that would have attended the delay of sending to the empress for permission to wait upon her at an hour and on a matter so unusual, that the Duchess of Castleton determined upon waiving that ceremony, and confided in the plain good sense and indulgence of the empress to excuse her ; still, when the carriage stopped, and she looked upon Gertrude pale and terrified, and remembered that she had

herself never beheld her or heard of her existence until the evening before, it was with a hand that trembled a little at its own temerity that she sent in a note with a request that it might, if possible, be delivered to the empress-mother without delay.

In as short a time as she could have hoped, an answer was returned that the empress-mother was always happy to see the Duchess of Castleton, and desired that she might be conducted to her presence.

"You will remain here," the duchess said to Gertrude, "until I either return or send for you ; and I beseech of you, endeavour to compose yourself—your suspense shall be as short as I can make it. And now, God bless you ! I must not delay." And in the next moment Gertrude found herself alone, in a situation which might have appalled firmer nerves.

And moment succeeded to moment, and she was still alone, until at last she began almost to

fancy that she was in a dream. Ere she was able to wake from it, however, the duchess returned.

She looked flushed and agitated. "Come," she said hastily; "the empress has, with some difficulty, consented to see you. It was indeed a bold request of mine; but, as yet, I do not repent it. It is all I can say. You must do the rest yourself. You speak French?—it is well." And without another word being uttered on either side, the duchess hurried her *protégée* through the magnificent apartments of one of the most magnificent palaces in Europe, without permitting her to pause one moment, even in astonishment, had she been so disposed; but, in truth, Gertrude's faculties were too deeply engaged for extraneous objects to affect them much, and there was a floating mist before her eyes that would have caused even brighter objects to look dim.

She followed the duchess in almost breath-

less silence ; and in a few moments, a look expressive at once of anxiety and encouragement, cast on her by her kind friend, and some undefinable change in the manner of the officer who conducted them, as he made a respectful sign towards a door which stood half open, at the upper end of the suite through which they had passed, made her aware that she was about to enter the presence of the empress-mother of Russia. The officer retired with an expressive obeisance ; and the duchess taking the hand of Gertrude, who now trembled so much that she was scarcely able to support herself, led her within that half-open door, and there paused. There was perfect silence and stillness for the space, it might be, of two minutes ; and Gertrude, all bewildered and terrified as she was, had time to recover herself sufficiently to cast a furtive glance round the apartment in which she stood. It was not as extensive as some of those through which they had passed, but appeared to

surpass them all in splendour and adornment: it was almost sheeted with mirrors, of a description far excelling anything that Gertrude had ever seen before, and the poor trembler shrank back abashed at perceiving her own image form so prominent a part in that imperial chamber. The panels round the room were encrusted with lapis lazuli; and the floor consisted of a parquet of fine wood, inlaid with wreaths of mother-of-pearl. But, dazzling as were these splendid adornments, especially to the eye of a novice, there was an object within that chamber which, though unconnected with them, after the first hasty glance around, riveted the attention of Gertrude beyond them all.

A lady was sitting at a table, with her back towards the door, and bending over something on which she seemed attentively occupied. Several specimens of medals, devices, designs, and mottoes were scattered about her, with various pretty toys formed of ivory, and a tiny appa-

ratus for turning them, so elegant in its form and structure, as to be well suited not only to the hand of a female, but to that of an empress.

It was indeed Maria Feodorowna who sat thus occupied before them. She did not for a few moments seem to notice their entrance ; but from the quickened movement of her fingers as she pursued her task, it would appear that this was rather from an anxiety to complete it without interruption, than from not being aware of their presence ; for presently rising, she took up the little medal on which she had been working, and viewing it in various lights, she quietly turned to the duchess, and without expressing any surprise at her being there, or taking the slightest notice of poor Gertrude, she asked,

“ Do you ever amuse yourself in making designs for medals, Madame la Duchesse, or in making these pretty ivory toys ? — no ! — In England do the ladies consider such things be-

neath them? or, perhaps, too *hard* for them? Are not *hard* and *difficult* expressed by the same word in your English? You are so *solid*, even in your expressions, that you cannot describe or conceive an operation of the mind except through the medium of the body.” And she gave one of those glances which in the gay and feminine court of Marie Antoinette procured her the character of satirical; and which, perhaps, had its effect in causing the agitation of Marie Antoinette herself when the then Archduchess of Russia was first presented to her—an agitation so great as to oblige her to swallow a glass of water to recover her spirits.

There was not much in this reception, if such it could be called, and address, to encourage poor Gertrude; nor was the personal appearance of the empress calculated to diminish the awe which her presence inspired.

She was at that time considerably past what, in the most liberal sense, is termed the prime

of womanhood ; but, from unimpaired health, purchased by early hours and a regulated course of life, and from an animated and varied expression of countenance, the effect of constant occupation and activity of mind, she not only appeared many years younger than she really was, but even retained a considerable share of personal beauty. Her figure was noble and commanding ; and the head-dress which she wore, consisting of a hat surmounted by a full plume of soft and beautiful feathers, added to her height ; a lilac silk dress, made up close about her neck, showed to advantage the fine outline of her form, while it concealed the first inroads of age on the fading throat, and suited well in delicacy of colour to the fair complexion of her German extraction.

Still, as a woman—a mere lovely woman, the empress was decidedly too masculine in her air and manners, which even extended that character in some degree to her appearance. But

in a queen—even in a queen-consort, we are prepared for, if not desirous of finding it so. We have had such sad experience how ill suited a perfectly feminine and lovely woman is to fulfil the duties, and struggle against the trials, of that high station, that we are half tempted to adhere to the old-world maxim, that woman's proper sphere is in the shade. And yet it is a deep question ; for when was England more glorious than while the imperious Elizabeth swayed its sceptre ? or when was the feminine character more outraged than when gentle Mary reigned in Scotland ? In short,

Had great Elizabeth been never queen,
We ne'er had known what Mary should have been :
Had lovely Mary not been frail as fair,
We ne'er had known what gentle queens may dare.

But the season for extremes, the offspring of prejudice, is passing fast away : it is no longer believed necessary that a woman's hand must be either daubed with pastry or with ink, and it

is now admitted that ungartered stockings are not always blue. In these days of liberality, a woman may venture to sweeten conversation with her playfulness and wit, as well as pies or puddings with sugar-plums ; or mayhap may even confide the latter to an intelligent assistant, and while she herself becomes more the companion of her husband than of her cook, his table may be nevertheless elegantly supplied. And surely, surely, when such an incongruous character has once been tolerated as a good housewife and a rational companion, we no longer need despair of seeing justice and mercy, firmness and gentleness, go hand in hand ! We will hope more ; we will hope that since all that ages of experience have summed up as the best and most improving discipline for the human mind, has been lavished on a soil by nature fitted to receive it—we will hope in such a case for all the perfection that human nature is capable of attaining ; we will hope for dignity that

shall display itself in uncompromising principles of right and wrong, instead of narrow bigotry weighing moral truths by early prejudices; we will hope for that candour, that humility of genius, that will ever ask, is no one wiser than itself?—that, finding such, will make that person's wisdom its own; or failing such, will examine more deeply into itself, with the awful responsibility of being the fairest specimen of—human nature! And to what should such a discovery lead? to the godlike principle of being merciful to that in others to which we show no mercy in ourselves! And since it is maintained that mind is not matter,—since the science of phrenology, by seeming to lead to a contrary opinion, is by one party looked upon as enthusiasm, by another as infidelity, and the difference of the *bumps* in the head of a male philosopher from those of a female flirt is laughed at as imaginary,—why should it be supposed impossible that a female form should con-

tain the noblest mind ? Let us at least be consistent : though, alas ! when was prejudice ever yet consistent ? We acknowledge the athletic frame, the well-developed muscle, to denote strength and endurance in the trunk, the legs, and arms, but we deny such indications in the head : we confidently pronounce that the broad and open chest proclaims lungs expanded, healthful, and ready to do their office nobly ; but we refuse credence to the like manifestations for the brain. Once more, then, let us be consistent, and denying that mind is matter, let us believe that it cares not in what form it clothes itself, but that the difference between masculine and feminine intellect depends solely upon education. We do not say that such is our opinion ; what our private opinion may be, is of little consequence to the world ; all we are arguing for now is consistency in any doctrine on the subject. How far it is desirable that the two systems of education now so opposite, pursued

with regard to men and women, should be more nearly approximated, is another question ; and perhaps, in accordance with the political economist's principles of the " division of labour," it is best as it is : but there is no rule without exceptions, and when a woman's destiny calls upon her to assume the office that might seem to befit the other sex, we will hope that an education suited to that peculiar destiny cannot fail to render her " wisest, virtuous, discreet, best ;" and that to the lovely softness of Mary Stuart's character, without its weakness, may be joined the firm decision of Elizabeth Tudor's, without its sternness. Nor is there anything preposterous in the hope, in an age like the present ; although even no farther back than that in which Maria Feodorowna sought to seize the reins of government while they had yet scarcely fallen from the grasp of her murdered husband, and in a country then so far behind our own in moral improvement, it were perhaps impossible for a

woman, especially of high and commanding station, to rise superior to her own sex without assuming somewhat of the deportment of the other. How, indeed, could it well be otherwise, when educated women were so rare, that when such a phenomenon appeared, she was, by necessity as well as mutual consent, driven for companionship to their sole society, and hooted at, and persecuted by her own, like the poor bird who, once noticed and caressed by man, is never again admitted as a companion by its kind ?

Still, and with her many disadvantages, Maria Feodorowna was neither revoltingly masculine, nor oppressively pedantic ; and they were harsh indeed, who, in one whose chief aim certainly was the improvement of her people, could not pardon a little self-complacency on the success of her efforts. When she first asked the Duchess of Castleton if the ladies of England never employed themselves as she was

then employed, it was probably merely one of those careless questions that are so often asked without even the desire for an answer ; but happening to raise her eye at the moment, there was something, perhaps she could not herself have told what, in the exquisitely feminine and refined appearance of the two lovely islanders before her, which told to her acute but jealous mind, that the implied superiority of her occupations was unfelt, and she sought to avenge herself by a sarcasm. It also was unfelt, for the duchess only bowed and smiled ; and the empress, too noble-minded long to resent a mortification she had drawn upon herself, presently smiled also, and with good-humoured emphasis continued—

“ Yet, Madame la Duchesse, you must not think the mother of Russia too frivolous. Remember, if you find me designing medals, it is only to present them in return for one struck for me by the *Imperial Academy of Sciences*, in

acknowledgment of the countenance and protection I afforded them. And know, farther, duchess, that these employments are only taken up in our hours of relaxation. When your message reached us, we were engaged in looking over the accounts of some of our establishments; but, being always at the command of the Duchess of Castleton, we quitted our study, and repaired hither to receive her." And so saying, she threw from her hand the medal she had executed, and pushing the table a little from her, she turned the chair round, and seating herself upon it with the dignity which so well became her, she desired the duchess to be seated also. The duchess obeyed; and the empress then, as if for the first time, turning her eyes upon the faded and shrinking form of Gertrude, kindly said,

"Your young friend too seems in need of a chair. Sit down, young lady: we have heard your frightful story, and pity you from our

heart ; but if you will be guided by us, you will at once resign yourself to your own government, and be acquitted before the whole world ; for it should not be necessary to be Cæsar's wife for a woman to avoid suspicion."

" And if my death, honoured madam, would free me from suspicion, oh gladly would I die !" exclaimed poor Gertrude, roused by this sudden address,—“gladly would I die at all events by the hand of God ; but I do,—oh, duchess, tell the empress that I do shrink from such a trial and such a condemnation.” And sinking on her knees, she buried her face in her hands, and gave vent to her long-suppressed tears.

“ This is sad, this is unpleasant,” said the empress hastily. “ Pray, young lady, restrain your agitation. You know yourself to be innocent of the crime, do you not ? so we understood from the duchess at least.”

“ Innocent ! innocent of intending harm to my brother ?”

And poor Gertrude, though speaking French more correctly than the generality of English women, felt so unable to express the extent of her horror of the crime imputed to her, in any but her native language, which she knew it would be indecorous to use, that she contented herself with turning her pleading and almost reproachful eyes on the duchess, with an expression which seemed to say, "Is this all that you have done for me in your long interview?"

In fact, the duchess had purposely only given such outlines of the dismal story as were necessary to induce the empress to admit Gertrude to her presence, wishing the truth and animation of her own intense feelings to be called into play, to do the rest.

The empress caught the expression of Gertrude's countenance.

"Yes," she said, "the duchess has acquitted you; but I confess I am somewhat at a loss to understand how it is, if you feel yourself perfectly innocent, that you shrink so sensitively

from a trial. Know you not, that if neither you nor your husband appear, you will forfeit your estate?"

"And think you, madam, I should ever enjoy an estate earned by my own hand as the price of blood? And, oh God! of whose blood?" Gertrude exclaimed with more of vehemence than might perhaps have seemed perfectly consistent with the respect due to her to whom she spoke.

The empress paused for a moment, then half smiled and replied, "You are wrong there, young lady, you are wrong. A wish to profit by events as they occur has no necessary connexion with an effort to produce them, or even the desire beforehand for their occurrence. It might be, and probably is so, that this estate, as we understand it to be of noble account, would be better dispensed by you to those who in all countries need the assistance of the wealthy, than by him who seems ready to grasp at it by any means; and the fields will not look

less green, or the crops less luxuriant, because your poor brother was not suffered to live out the years you thought allotted to him."

"Honoured madam, it may be so—it must be so, as your majesty in your wisdom deems it so; but I am a broken reed—no more capable of dispensing blessings to others now, than I am of receiving them myself. Oh, let me but escape and hide myself in some obscure corner of the world, until God recalls me to himself!" and she held up her hands in earnest supplication.

"There is something in all this I do not understand," said Maria Feodorowna, turning to the duchess: "such despair, such heartfelt hopelessness, at her age, where all her intentions were pure and innocent, is past my comprehension; and truly I scarcely know what we can do with her.—Hearken!" she exclaimed suddenly, and turning to a door which opened to the more private apartments of the palace,

"Here comes the empress, here comes our

well-beloved daughter ! You see, duchess, we of the Imperial House of Russia live perfectly *en famille* with each other. Have you not heard so ? Is it the same with your royal family in England ?”

Before the duchess had time to answer, the reigning empress, Elizabeth, entered the apartment, and almost started at perceiving how it was occupied. In a moment, however, recovering herself, she addressed the lady of the English ambassador with dignified courtesy, and, instantly struck with the air of misery and excitement but too visible in Gertrude, she asked if her presence were intrusive.

The empress-mother hesitated for a moment ; then, as if she had come to some decision, she exclaimed,

“ No ; on the contrary, we will hope it is providential. It is said that ‘ in a multitude of counsellors there is safety ; ’ and as safety is what we want at present, let us, my fair daughter, have the benefit of your wisdom

on an interesting occasion." And so saying, she drew the empress into the recess of a window, whither in a few minutes beckoning the Duchess of Castleton to join them, she caused her to fill up the details of the dismal story of which she herself had given the outline to the young empress.

The duchess seized the opportunity to enlarge more upon the whole matter, and upon Gertrude's hapless situation, than she had yet done, having found Gertrude herself utterly incapable of doing justice to it. Both the princesses, during the recital, shed tears; and Gertrude, who heard much of what passed, sometimes wrung her hands, and sobbed in convulsive anguish.

When the conference was finished, the Empress Elizabeth approached the afflicted girl, and gazing for a moment on her youthful and exquisitely beautiful countenance, said, "You shall not suffer persecution. Our imperial and much-honoured mother is interested in your fate, and

also the noble Duchess of Castleton" (bowing to her). "It would not answer for her to take you into her household ; but come with me, and I shall keep you as an attendant on myself. I have had an English attendant once before, so that the circumstance need not excite extraordinary suspicion ; only we shall show you as little as possible in public, as yours is not an appearance to pass unnoticed. *Au reste*, we trust that you will find our country residence no loathsome prison."

We may readily conceive the joy and gratitude with which the Duchess of Castleton heard this proposal made to her hapless *protégée*—one so far beyond the utmost she could have ventured to solicit for her ; and Gertrude herself, much as her own secret longings were after the utmost solitude, and most profound retirement from almost all of human kind, felt that it would be madness not to accept, and indecorous not to return thanks for, an offer that promised at least immediate protection ; and

whilst the Duchess of Castleton should continue in St. Petersburg, she persuaded herself she could not feel utterly amongst strangers.

A little plan was hastily sketched out on the instant for eluding surmise and conjecture respecting Gertrude's sudden appearance in the imperial palace; and for this purpose it was arranged to allow it to be understood that she was an unfortunate young lady, a friend of the Duchess of Castleton's, whose husband had died suddenly, and that the duchess had made interest to have her received into the household, to instruct the Empress Elizabeth in the English language. Her emaciated and miserable appearance was well calculated to confirm any tale of woe; and the Emperor Alexander, whose acute mind might have led him to make further inquiries on the subject, especially in consequence of the English warrant, was fortunately still absent, engaged in the momentous discussions which at that period called into exercise every talent, every principle, and nearly every quality

of the highest and the wisest of the sons of earth.

Agreeably to this plan, the Duchess of Castleton engaged to send Gertrude the dress proper for a widow according to the English fashion of the day ; and although Gertrude's feelings slightly revolted from this, her own good sense, together with a glance of caution from the duchess, who read her expressive countenance, told her how ill-timed such fastidiousness must prove, when others had run so much risk for her.

The duchess soon after rose to take her leave, fearful alike of intruding too long upon her imperial hostess, and of exciting the curiosity of the duke by her prolonged absence. She once more gracefully and respectfully expressed her gratitude ; and turning to her *protégée*, bade her as cordial a farewell as the circumstances admitted of, and followed the attendant officer from the presence.

Gertrude remained standing for a moment, as if in a state of stupefaction. She had appeared

to receive the adieus of the duchess calmly—coldly—as if mechanically; but she was too new to the world, and her feelings in too much excitement, to remain composed at such a moment. She endeavoured to restrain herself; but it was in vain: as she heard the receding footsteps of her only friend, and looked upon herself as irrevocably shut out from Vandeleur and all news of him, her presence of mind and self-possession utterly forsook her, and either forgetful of the presence in which she stood, or at the moment disregarding all artificial ceremonies in the intensity of her feelings, she suddenly sprang to the door of the apartment, and without one word of apology, or even once looking behind her, flew after the duchess, nor paused until she threw herself, panting from agitation, into her arms.

The duchess, not guessing how abrupt had been her proceeding, only implored of her to compose herself, and to tell her if there was anything more she wished to say.

“ You will not forget me? you will not lose sight of me entirely?” Gertrude sobbed forth. “ Oh, say, say you will not, or I shall not quit you!”

“ Lose sight of you I must, my love, for both our sakes,” said the duchess, shedding tears also; “ but to forget you would be as impossible as to forget that I myself exist.”

“ But you will not lose your interest in me? Vow to me, that you will watch over me still, my guardian angel!”

“ Indeed, indeed I will; but, dearest, think of where we are, and try not too far our noble hostesses. Command yourself, my love, and suffer me to go.”

“ Oh God! farewell then! But, duchess, I must say one word more: it cannot surely be wrong. Will you contrive to learn that he—that Major Vandeleur is attended to? In *you* it cannot be indecorous.” And she hid her blushing face in the duchess’s bosom.

“ Trust me, trust me, he shall be cared for!”

the duchess answered, bending her own cheek over Gertrude's. I shall contrive to have the accident reach the duke's ears, and *through him* every attention shall be paid to Vandeleur."

"Ah, but will you yourself not see that it is done? the duke may have so much to think of; and indeed it is most unreasonable of me to expect that even you can remember or interest yourself in this; but if he *could* know that I am safe—I know it would tend so much to his recovery!"

"He *shall* know it. Trust everything to me, and be assured I shall forget nothing."

"You are an angel upon earth," said Gertrude, raising her head, and gazing on her with an expression of unfeigned admiration, and almost of astonishment.

The duchess shrank from it.

"Nay," she said, "you must not give me more credit than I deserve. Remember, Gertrude, there is but One that can know the

windings of the human heart. If I can escape the slightest tinge of self-condemnation, the slightest reproach of selfishness in all this, it will be a subject for my warmest gratitude. Farewell, and pray it for me. God bless you!" And so saying, she tore herself from Gertrude's arms, and, regaining her carriage, was conveyed rapidly back to St. Petersburg.

Poor Gertrude returned, with slow and pensive steps, to the chamber where the two empresses, although a good deal astonished at her sudden and impetuous flight, and even doubtful of her ultimate return, kindly and condescendingly waited the event.

Gertrude made an attempt at an apology, which, if not very intelligible, was aided by so vivid a blush, and so gentle and subdued a countenance, that it was taken in good part; and she was almost instantly given in charge to one of the ladies of the household, with a considerate intimation, in order to spare her the pain of idle questions and importunities, that

her grief was of too recent a date to endure the slightest allusion to it ; and that, as a friend of the Duchess of Castleton's, she was to be treated with tenderness and consideration, and suffered to live in the privacy that suited her at present. In this privacy we also shall leave her, and look after Vandeleur.

CHAPTER XXII.

They met, but not as they had been
For time had drawn a veil between
That makes familiar things seem strange,
And each was sensible of change.
Their course of life had been apart,
Diverse the history of each heart.
And, now in distant scenes they met,
The past came thronging back : regret
It was not, that with memory came.—

• • • • •
Silent they were, though inly glad ;
Seeing, you might have deemed them sad :
And in their oft-averted eyes
Restraint there was, but not disguise,
For neither had a thought to hide.

THE wound which Vandeleur had received, though such as to incapacitate him from all exertion, and indeed for some time to deprive him of recollection, was not by any means dangerous

in itself; and the only apprehension his surgeon felt was of an excess of fever from the violent state of agitation under which he laboured. Finding that neither reason nor argument could prevail upon him even to attempt to compose himself, Dumoulin administered to him a strong narcotic, under the influence of which he fell into a deep and protracted slumber.

It was almost morning when he awakened from it. For some time he was at a loss, as is usual in such cases, to recollect what had befallen him, or where he was; but it only required a few minutes to bring the circumstances of the evening before him.

He sat up in his bed, and perceiving an old woman who had been appointed to watch by him, nodding at his bedside, he put out his hand to rouse her. The woman roared aloud as if a ghost had touched her.

"What is the matter?" asked Vandeleur angrily; "why do you shout in that manner, to alarm the house?"

"Faith, for that matter," replied the woman, sulky at the prospect of losing the gratuities which she, in common with the rest of the idlers about the establishment, had expected from the French count and his lady, both of whom it now began to be suspected had disappeared for ever, "Faith, for that matter, there are but few in the house to alarm; and them few, I wish they were alarmed up, and with us; for, what with the frights of one kind or another I have got this evening, I don't know when I shall be the better of it."

"What frights?" asked Vandeleur; "and how do you mean there are but few people in the house?"

"Oh, no matter, sir," replied the woman with recollected prudence. "You are not to talk; the doctor says you are to be kept quiet; so I won't tell you what has happened."

Vandeleur threw himself back in his bed in despair, lest nothing he could say could overcome such stupid propriety.

“ Come, my good woman,” said he at last, “ I’ll tell you what it is. You see I am not very ill; that long sleep has restored me. Now, if you don’t this moment tell me what has happened, I shall jump out of bed, run out of the room, lock the door behind me, make my escape from the house, and, as they will be afraid to come to disturb me while you do not appear, you shall be left shut up here, either till you starve, or if I die on the way, as is very likely, until my ghost comes and plays a pretty game with you.”

And so saying, he suddenly put out his hand, and caught her arm in a grasp she could not struggle against. Her only resource was another scream; but as Vandeleur, as soon as he could command his countenance, seemed about to put his threat into execution, she exclaimed, “ Oh, lie quiet—for the love of God lie quiet, if you be not entirely mad, and I will tell you everything.”

“ Well, do so; and as I judge whether it

is true or not, so I will let go your arm or not."

Thus exhorted, the woman proceeded to inform him of the separate disappearance of the count and countess.

Nothing could exceed his astonishment and despair. Had they arranged to depart at separate hours, but to meet at some appointed place? or was Gertrude gone out upon the wide world alone? were questions which he asked himself, but which he could not answer. He inquired of his attendant if the countess visited much.

"No; they were strangers here: no one ever came near them; and the countess never had her foot outside the door until the evening before the last, that she went to the play; but she was surely going somewhere last night, for she was elegantly dressed out."

Vandeleur was lost in amazement—conjecture it could not be called, for he knew not a single point on which to found even a surmise beyond what he was told.

In this cruel state of perplexity, he counted the tedious hours until his physician called ; and if the latter was surprised at the state of excessive agitation and excitement in which he found his patient, notwithstanding the powerful effects of the narcotic, the patient was not less surprised at the dark and ominous expression of concentrated wrath, which took possession of Dumoulin's features, when Vandeleur adverted to the disappearance of the count and countess.

" I do not know what to make of it," said Dumoulin ; " but this I know, that so sure as he has played me false, and escaped me, I will make him repent the hour. I know more than he dreams I do. My uncle was not such a fool as to send me with him without the rope in my pocket, ready to fling round his neck whenever I should feel it necessary to do so. I had indeed at one time nearly given up all hopes, and left him to his fate ; but since he came here, matters have looked so promising that I thought all was upon the eve of accomplishment."

"You seem deeply interested, sir," said Vandeleur: "have you then known them long?"

"Long enough to do him a mischief if he does me one," replied Damoulin; "but I shall wait to see, I shall wait to see; and then, *sacré!*" He ground his teeth in anticipation of his revenge.

"But can you conceive whither his lady is gone?" resumed Vandeleur.

"I cannot. I now recollect, what did not strike me much at the time, that when I saw her last evening, she seemed, though inclined to converse upon indifferent subjects, yet reserved in expressing her opinion concerning her husband's sudden departure. I am inclined to think she has followed him by appointment."

Vandeleur groaned.

"And you can form no idea where he is likely to have gone?"

"None. We parted not very amicably yesterday. He was in a devilish bad humour setting out; and when I pressed the question of

—of—his accession to his wife's property, he evaded it in a manner I did not altogether like; and we gave up, at his suggestion, an excursion we had proposed into the country."

Vandeleur perceived that there was some connexion between M. Dumoulin and De l'Espoir, which the former did not yet choose to explain; and as he perceived also that he could give no further information on the subject of the flight, he dropped it for the present, and determined to endeavour by every means in his power—even by the most difficult of all, that of keeping his mind at rest—to expedite his own recovery, in order to be ready, should the opportunity ever occur, to save or assist Gertrude. Such was the sensitive delicacy of his feeling for her, that, when questioned the evening before if he had any friends in St. Petersburg whom he wished to have informed of his accident, he declined even sending for his servant Whitecross, in order to prevent the conjectures that must arise in his mind from the apparently suspicious

circumstances under which he received his wound. With this view, he still determined to dispense with his attendance, and, under all the inconveniences likely to ensue, to remain quietly where he was, for the short time that he hoped would be necessary to enable him to seek his own hotel.

He was not destined, however, to preserve the *incognito* he wished for. Dumoulin had not very long departed from the house, half distracted between anger and curiosity, when a message was brought to Vandeleur, that a servant from the English ambassador was below, with the duke's compliments, and a request to know in what manner he could show his attention to Major Vandeleur's wishes; "And here is a little note he brought," added the person who delivered the message.

Vandeleur eagerly caught at the billet. It was in a beautiful female hand, and contained but one single line,—“She for whom you are anxious is safe!” It had no signature, and

Vandeleur had never happened to see the duchess's handwriting ; but it was sealed with a device which he had once suggested—a female figure with the finger across the lips as imposing secrecy, and he felt as satisfied of Gertrude's safety as if he had heard a voice from Heaven.

“ My own Gertrude ! ” he exclaimed tenderly, as he thought with delight on her having had the prudence to fly to the lady of the English ambassador for protection, and as he now traced the duke's attention to her solicitude for his peace of mind. There was something, too, in her having thus unconsciously cast herself into the arms of her once powerful rival, which made her inexpressibly and unaccountably dear to him at that moment.

To the message from the duke, and the precious little note, he returned but one general answer of thanks, and a promise to wait on the ambassador as soon as he should be sufficiently recovered ; and he was obliged to make as powerful efforts to prevent his joy now, as his despair be-

fore, from retarding that anxiously-desired recovery.

Between the skill of his physician, however, and his own determination to recover, the present wound proved very different from that he sustained nearly two years before from the same hand, though probably intended to be much more fatal in its effects. In less than a week he was able to leave his room, and it need scarcely be mentioned that his first visit was to the Duke of Castleton.

He was shown into the duchess's morning apartment, where the duke happened to be at the moment also. He had not until then seen the duchess since her marriage, and the first words that she or the duke uttered, were exclamations from both, at Vandeleur looking so extremely well after his accident. A few moments, however, showed that the high colour which led them into this belief was transitory.

"I am delighted to see you, Vandeleur," said the duke, "and particularly to-day. I was just

meditating a visit to you myself, and came in to consult the duchess about the expediency of it. I have received a most disagreeable task to-day, and on a frightful sort of subject ; and it just occurred to me that it was possible you could throw some light upon the matter, if the stories which have reached me of the circumstances of your wound are true. The matter is this : a warrant has been sent from England, and confirmed by the authorities here, and I am called on to sanction it, for the apprehension of a French gentleman, and his companion, an English lady, for a most extraordinary murder—that of the lady's brother. Similar orders have been sent all over Europe where our people reside ; and as I understand a large property depends upon it, no stone will be left unturned to discover the fugitives. Now, is it true that the Frenchman who wounded you was married to an English lady ? and have you any objection to mention whatever you know about them ?”

Vandeleur had, during the course of this address, ventured, unperceived by the duke, to glance towards the duchess, in order to learn how the news had affected her ; but by the determined manner in which she kept her eyes fastened on some elegant trifle of embroidery which she held in her hand, he not only perceived that she was perfectly at ease on the subject of Gertrude's safety, but did not choose that the least sign of intelligence should pass between them.

For one moment the thought shot across his brain, " Could I after all be mistaken, and is she really totally ignorant of the whole matter ?" It was a moment of agony, but it passed away ; —no one else could have written that blessed line. The duke waited for an answer ; and Vandeleur, still in utter ignorance of all Gertrude's plans and wishes, was at a loss what answer to return, lest he might in some manner interfere with them. The duke saw his hesitation, and was about to relieve him from it,

when the duchess rising hastily, said with a smile, "As you gentlemen have thought proper to turn my drawing-room into a court of justice I shall retire; and when you have pronounced sentence you may send for me again."

She was leaving the room, when, as Vandeleur turned to receive her bow, for one single instant, as she stood shaded by the door, she threw herself into the exact attitude of the figure on the seal, and disappeared.

Vandeleur caught the token, and now confined his answer to an assurance of his total ignorance of whither the fugitives had directed their flight. The duke forbore to press the subject. Indeed, the agitation that Vandeleur could not control, on hearing that the warrant for Gertrude's arrest had actually arrived, had not wholly escaped his observation, and he felt politely anxious to change the subject without delay.

They had scarcely fallen into another, when a little confusion of whispering and rustling at

the door was succeeded by its being slowly opened, and a beautiful little girl of three years old being pushed gently into the room by some invisible hand. When once her entrance was effected, she strutted boldly up to the duke, and in the sweet lisping accents of infancy, said, "Papa, mamma sends me to remind you of the appointment you have at this o'clock, and—and—for the gentleman to go away, I believe."

The duke took the child's hand. "Oh no, Theodosia, I am sure that mamma did not say that. I rather suppose it was to ask the gentleman to dine with us."

"No *indeed*, papa, it was not," replied the child eagerly.

"Well, Theo, do you go and ask him now?"

"No, papa; I think mamma wants him away, and wants you to go out."

"Silly, inhospitable child! no," said the duke, smiling; then turning to Vandeleur, "The fact is, the duchess knows that I have an appointment of a very particular nature this

morning ; but if you will return and dine with us, or remain now and send for dress, you will give us great pleasure. I can answer for the duchess, I assure you, notwithstanding the *gaucherie* of this little animal, of whom she is so proud that she takes every opportunity of sending her in to be seen. She ought to teach her better manners," he said, patting the child's head. "But, seriously, she will be delighted, I know ; I assure you she was most anxious during your illness, and almost every little attention that was shown you in my name, was suggested by her ; she has quite an affection for your mother. Do stay ; you now look quite well again."

Vandeleur bowed, but positively declined the invitation, pleading his recent illness and fear of the night-air ; but in his own mind he determined to take some step, either to see or hear from the duchess in private, in order to learn something more of the situation of Gertrude : for although some judicious mediciner "to the

mind diseased" has of old mercifully prescribed that "no news" is to be taken as "good news," still this negative good is but meagre fare, and will not long satisfy an ardent anxiety.

But the matter was better arranged for Vandeleur. "See now, Theodosia, you have made the gentleman go away," said the duke as he rang for his carriage.

The sweet child looked shy and distressed, and left the room. Presently, however, exactly as Vandeleur's carriage, and the duke's, were together announced, the little girl returned, leading in her mother by the hand, as if to give her an opportunity of rectifying some error, of which she perceived she had herself been guilty.

The duke laughed at the child's consideration, but, saying he had not time to see it out, ran down stairs while Vandeleur was receiving the duchess's apology.

"In fact," she said, "the duke *has* a very particular appointment, which he will scarcely

now have time to keep, and I also am obliged to drive some miles into the country immediately ; but, as I wished for a few minutes' conversation with you, it made my mind particularly tenacious of the hour."

She paused, and Vandeleur's heart beat high at this announcement. However, as he only bowed, the duchess was obliged to proceed, though with some slight degree of hesitation, which she vainly endeavoured to control.

"I shall not detain you many minutes," she began ; "but there are two things I wished to say to you : the one concerns myself, the other more particularly you. I shall dismiss my own part first. I wish to explain the sign which I made to you on leaving the room, and which I am conscious," she said with a vivid blush, and a look of distress at not being able to subdue that blush,—“which I am aware must have appeared strange to you. The explanation is this : The duke is in utter ignorance of every circumstance relating to this dreadful business,

except what he learned officially to-day. I, on the contrary, am in possession of them all—*all*; and while I believe that there does not exist a monster who could withstand the innocence, beauty, and fascination of the—of your—of *Gertrude* in short, I felt that there would be impropriety and indelicacy in my exerting my influence with the duke, to turn him from the course of his duty. I have therefore taken her protection on myself: I have ensured her safety, and it was at her entreaty I communicated it to you. As soon as the duke gives up this embassy, I intend to make a full confession of my disobedience, not however as is generally the case,” she added with a smile, “until I have reaped all the fruits of it.” She paused, and played with the sunny curls of the child’s hair. “For *Gertrude*,” she continued, seeing that Vandeleur made no attempt to speak, “I absolutely *cannot* tell you more than that she is in perfect safety, and *not* with that wretched man. Of his movements she knows no more than you do.

Where I have placed her, she will remain until this storm is past ; and believe me that no care —no attention on my part shall be wanting to soothe and comfort her. I never saw so lovely, so interesting a creature.”

Having said this, she was slowly rising as if to bid good morning, when Vandeleur recovering his speech, of which he had hitherto appeared to be deprived, exclaimed,

“ Duchess of Castleton ! I will not thank you for your surpassing goodness. Your own heart must tell you all that mine should wish to say.” He stopped, deeply agitated.

“ My dear Major Vandeleur !” she exclaimed in a playful voice, to dissipate her own emotion, “ how you overrate a trifling exertion in behalf of a most interesting and injured being ! They must be hard-hearted indeed who could resist her ; and then you could not, I hope, doubt my wish to serve any friend of yours, or, as the poor people so expressively say, ‘ of your mother’s son.’ My little girl tells me you cannot

dine with us to-day, and indeed I think you are only prudent ; but I hope we shall see you soon again."

She made another movement to end the conversation ; but Vandeleur having now completely recovered himself, said,

"Suffer me to trespass on you a few minutes longer, if indeed your engagement is not of a very pressing nature, and to profit by a goodness which I so deeply feel. Since I must not inquire where Gertrude is, may I, not at least be told if she is likely to continue long there? what her plans are afterwards?—in short, Duchess of Castleton, as you are aware of our miserable circumstances, and of Gertrude's peculiarly friendless condition, you will not wonder that I am most anxious, if possible, to have even one interview with her, and to learn from her own lips her intentions for the future. In every point of view, as her betrothed husband, and now her father's executor, it is even my duty to watch over her."

“ Major Vandeleur, believe me, there is not any one can more deeply sympathise in your feelings on this subject than I do ; and it is not with a view to deprive you of the gratification which you so naturally wish for, that I assure you that Gertrude shall never again be friendless or unprotected. I really do not at this moment know her further plans, nor do I believe she does herself ; but I shall see her for the purpose of learning them, in order to satisfy your mind ; and if she will consent to the interview you propose, I shall endeavour to facilitate it.”

“ And may I entreat that you will make her understand, that I have no object now in life but to watch for every opportunity of serving her ?”

“ I will.”

“ And when may I receive her answer ?”

“ I shall let you know as soon as I receive it.”

Vandeleur once more endeavoured to express

his thanks; but the duchess would not listen to them; and having made her little girl shake hands with him, she bade him good morning.

Two days passed over without his hearing from her again. On the morning of the third he received a note requesting him to call. He found her alone. She proceeded at once to relieve his anxiety.

"I requested an interview, Major Vandeleur," she began, "in preference to writing to you, partly because Gertrude herself wished that it should be so, and partly because what I have to say may call forth objections, arguments, or entreaties on your part, which might lead to a protracted correspondence, and perhaps not be satisfactory at last."

"Have you then seen Gertrude since?" Vandeleur asked with evident anxiety.

"Oh yes, indeed I have," the duchess answered, smiling. "I have seen her several times in her hiding-place, and I assure you she looks infinitely better than when she entered

there. Be assured, it is no loathsome dungeon ; but you must, I fear, be satisfied with this assurance,—*you must not think of seeing her yourself.*”

“ For how long ?”

The duchess looked down, and seemed distressed as she answered, “ That must depend on circumstances over which none of us have any control. In short, Major Vandeleur, I am sorry to be the messenger of a disappointment to you ; but poor Gertrude is limited at present in confidantes, and therefore I have engaged to say to you from her, that she cannot think of seeing you any more. She implores of you to return to England, and to endeavour to seek for happiness from some other source.”

Vandeleur turned very pale. “ Happiness ! happiness !” he repeated ; “ that is a strange word for Gertrude to mock me with. No ; I think I was born under some planet beneath which happiness is for ever doomed to wither.”

"Do not say so, Major Vandeleur," said the duchess, pitying the bitterness of feeling under which he seemed to labour; "you have, I grant, been severely tried, but you have surely lived long enough to be a convert to the doctrine at which first youth spurns so contemptuously,—namely, that there are various degrees of happiness, and that it is manifest presumption in any one to murmur if his own be not the highest."

There was something in the quiet sincerity with which the duchess uttered these words, that, in the irritable state into which Vandeleur's feelings had been thrown by this message from Gertrude, made him feel them almost a cold-hearted insult; and he said with increased bitterness, "Yes, Duchess of Castleton, it is easy for those to uphold that doctrine who are in possession of all that their hearts can covet."

The duchess did not raise her eyes; but a gentle smile, and a very faint suffusion, passed

over her beautiful countenance. Vandeleur felt disposed to shoot himself. However, as there was no implement of destruction at hand, he was obliged to content himself with rising hastily from his chair, clasping his hands together, and exclaiming with heartfelt earnestness, "Forgive me, forgive me, duchess!"

"What for?" she asked, now looking up and smiling openly; "for supposing me in possession of all my heart can covet? I assure you, you are right; I really am so. I thank God, I can sincerely say, there is nothing upon earth that I covet; or, lest that word may sound ambiguous, there are few things I have left even to wish for; and foremost of these few, is yours and Gertrude's happiness. This wish indeed, I fear, is not as likely to be granted as almost all my others are; for one reason why she wished me to speak, instead of writing to you, is to enforce upon you, against any arguments or persuasions you might use, her unalterable determination to see you no more."

“ In any event ? ”

“ In any event which she permits herself to take into consideration.”

“ And may I not even be informed of her plans for the future ? am I not to be permitted to make myself useful to her in any way ? ”

“ Of her plans for the future she can say little, not having formed any very definitely, beyond remaining where she is at present ; and she particularly entreats that you will give up all intention of watching over her, as the idea of this prevents her mind from regaining that composure she might otherwise in time obtain. Nay, do not look so shocked ; I am sure you cannot but appreciate the feelings which dictate this apparently unkind command.”

“ Let me ask one question ; and answer me sincerely, I beseech. Are these commands the result of her own unbiassed judgment, or are they——”

“ I believe, entirely her own. At least this I know, that I was faithful to my trust,

and gave your message without note or comment. Indeed, had I presumed to give advice, perhaps it might not have been so rigid ; for I am of too proud a spirit to think that there is no safety but in flight. On the contrary, I think that wherever there is a great sacrifice constantly kept up, self-complacency does what constancy never would have done, and invests the matter with a factitious importance which fixes it indelibly in the imagination. However, people's minds and feelings are differently constituted ; and those who differ in opinion from me, I can well believe, may have excellent reasons for doing so. In Gertrude's case I know it to be so. She has vowed obedience to one who would disapprove of her holding communication with you ; and this renders it a positive duty in her not to do so. Let me have the satisfaction of informing her, that you respect her feelings, that you will return to England ; and depend on me, that should any change occur—any opportunity in which you could be

of use to her—you shall immediately be informed of it. I can always know your address through your mother.”

“And when you and the Duke of Castleton return to England, will Gertrude return there too?”

“At present, she says not; she declares she would rather bury herself in the farthest corner of the earth, than ever appear there again: but these feelings may subside.”

“You have yourself no idea of when you shall return?”

“Why no. There is, you know, some rumour of a change of ministry; but the duke does not think it likely to take place; and if not, we both like our residence here well enough to remain for some time longer. You know it was *my* fancy to come: I always had a great curiosity about Russia since the agreeable emperor was with us, and had very little hope of satisfying it in any other way; so I must not be impatient now.”

Vandeleur fell into a gloomy reverie. He had indeed very little now on earth to cheer him. The thought even came across him, of how ill he had been rewarded for the command which he had formerly exercised over his feelings with respect to Lady Seaton ; but from this he started at once, as every way unworthy of her, of himself,—perhaps, most of all, of Gertrude. He next glanced with momentary regret on having given up his profession ; but from this he also turned away, for he felt conscious that he could no longer have maintained the character there which he had so justly acquired. He felt desolate and wayward, and seemed disposed to indulge in a protracted silence.

“Come,” said the duchess, “I must rouse you from this abstraction, even by telling you to imitate your own Gertrude. She sees her duty and performs it. You surely will not be a stumbling-block in her way, by hovering about her, when she has confessed it to be

essential to her peace that you should return to your own country?"

"No! let her be assured that I will *not* be a stumbling-block in her way."

"Nay, I will not deliver this message either. I am not one of those rigidly right who think that fire and sword should be employed to keep asunder two hearts which fate will not permit to be united in the closest bonds; because I no more believe in the frailty that makes it impossible to confine the indulgence within proper bounds, than I can think that the absence of temptation constitutes purity: but, at the same time, if from any circumstance either party wishes for that separation, I think they are guilty indeed who counteract that prudence. Come, say you will obey Gertrude's behests, for she is indeed an angel."

"She is," said Vandeleur warmly, and heaving off a load of waywardness and indecision with a deep sigh, he added, "and she is

not alone in that character even upon earth. I *will* obey your and her commands ; I shall return to England : but, Duchess of Castleton, you will be merciful to me ?” he said with deep and emphatic pleading in his voice and countenance ; “ you will remember my wretched situation, and let me hear sometimes of Gertrude ? I am aware of the extent of what I ask.”

“ My dear Major Vandeleur, I shall have the greatest pleasure in complying with your request : indeed I should have done so without it. Your mother and I correspond regularly ; but now my letters to her will be more frequent, and much more interesting. Farewell ! I shall be anxious to hear from her how you fulfil the spirit of our injunctions ; and pray be always assured of my kindest regard and esteem.” She held out her hand, and Vandeleur pressed it respectfully, affectionately. If a tear dropped on it, Gertrude herself might have analysed that tear.

The door had nearly closed upon his receding figure, when he hastily re-entered the room and said, "Duchess of Castleton, I *will* trespass one step farther; it will probably be the last, and you will forgive it. Will you see Gertrude once more? will you tell her that I obey? And suffer me to wait upon you once more, to learn how she receives the communication, how she feels when she learns that I too have appeared to abandon her; and ask her at least if there is nothing that I can do for her in England? nothing that she would like to have sent to her from Beanton?"

The duchess complied with this request also; but if Vandeleur had in his secret soul founded any hope upon it, of a revocation of Gertrude's orders, he was disappointed: the only message she sent to him was heartfelt thanks for his obedience; the only commission, a request that he would destroy his own letters, which were in the little letter-box which he had sent to her in happier days, for the purpose of containing

them, and of which she now sent him the key.

“ I am to go then,” he said. “ But if your stay in St. Petersburg should be long protracted, I may return, even without any hope of seeing her.”

“ We cannot, of course, control your movements any farther than as concerns her.”

It was then arranged that the duchess was to become Gertrude's banker, and that Vandeleur should make any necessary remittances of money through her. He paid his respects to the duke, and almost immediately after this last interview he set off with a heavy heart for England.

CHAPTER XXIII.

And at the last a path of little bread
I found, that greatly had not used be ;
For it forgrowne was with grasse and weed,
That well unneth a wighte might it se :
Thought I, this path some whider go'th pardé ;
And so I followed till it me brought
To right a pleasaunt herber, well ywrought.

The Flower and Lefe.

IN the mean time, not a trace was discovered of either of the fugitives by the emissaries despatched in search of them ; and days had grown to weeks, weeks were stretching into months, and Gertrude, in her splendid retirement, seemed gradually regaining as much peace and composure of mind as could have been expected for her under circumstances so peculiar. She still, indeed, shunned with nervous apprehension

meeting strangers of whatever rank or description ; but as she was not in any way compelled to do so, she suffered but little inconvenience from that feeling. Her duties about her imperial mistress from the first had been little more than nominal, and even the slight task of reading some French romance for an hour or two in the dressing-room, or giving her a short lesson in the pronunciation of English sentences, had been almost wholly discontinued since the return of the emperor ; for Gertrude, who knew not the jealous weakness of Elizabeth's temper, was as much surprised as delighted at the willing permission accorded her, to absent herself entirely during his visits to his royal consort ; while so lost was she herself to the common interests and curiosity of life, of which she once partook so largely, that while the rest of the world—at least the world by which she was surrounded—was exhausting itself in efforts to do honour to the return of their imperial hero, and rending the very skies with acclamations in his

praise, there was one being within his very palace-walls, and night after night sleeping under the same roof with him, who had never even by stealth obtained a sight of him, and of whose very existence he was as ignorant as if she had continued to dwell in her own England. Gertrude was in fact, as she herself expressed it, though outwardly a living body, a corpse within ; and although she ate a little, and slept a little, and moved about a little, it seemed really to be more the effect of habit than volition.

It soon appeared, however, as if even the outward tranquillity she had of late enjoyed was more than was deemed good for her at present ; for it had continued but a very short time, when it was again disturbed by the news of a change in the cabinet at home ; in consequence of which, the Duke of Castleton had requested to be recalled, and preparations were already in progress for his leaving Russia.

Gently and kindly as this intelligence was

communicated to Gertrude, it came upon her as a dreadful stroke. Her young and enthusiastic heart, at all times ready to fling some of its sweet fibres round anything fitted to receive them, had in its present desolation wholly abandoned itself to one so entirely worthy of it as the Duchess of Castleton ; and to part with her now, and she herself to remain behind in *so very foreign* a country, seemed but another of the many deaths she had already been doomed to die.

To her gentle mistress Gertrude felt a grateful and respectful attachment ; but their ranks were too far apart, and their circumstances too different, to admit of anything like friendship ; while the good ladies of the household, though they could not behold without pity, and some degree of interest, the deep but unobtrusive melancholy of the young and lovely English-woman, were too different from her in their habits, feelings, and ideas, for anything like confidence to exist between her and them, even if

her sorrows had not been of a nature that called for the closest reserve on her part.

At the same time, they, worthy souls ! contrived to satisfy their own curiosity respecting her, by filling up the outline of the rumour that had reached them of the affray between the count and Vandeleur ; and assured each other that it was Gertrude's husband who had been " barbarously murdered," and that when the English ambassador went to administer the knout to the offender with his own hands, he fell so desperately in love with the young widow, that the duchess was fain to hide her in the palace, where the duke would not dare to seek her, under the protection of their virtuous empress.

Perhaps this story answered the purpose of concealment as well as any that the parties themselves could have invented, though not exactly such as Gertrude might have selected, and obtained all the readier belief, because it had birth amongst themselves. Some — that is, the

few who were so fastidious as to require a show of consistency—added that she was a cousin of the duke's or the duchess's, (on this point the authorities were not agreed,) which was the reason of the great intimacy between her and the duchess: and, according as the fair *causalists* leaned to the weak, or the virtuous side of human nature, they asserted that Gertrude remained concealed from the duke by her own free will, or was flattered and bribed by the duchess into that prudent measure.

Little indeed, if any, of this gossip was ever obtruded on Gertrude's ear; but still it is not much to be wondered at, that when the news reached her of the intended departure of the Duchess of Castleton, her kind, her true, her refined and delicate friend and protectress, her first momentary impulse was to throw herself into her arms and exclaim,

“Take me with you! at any risk to myself, take me with you, dearest duchess! I cannot remain here without you.”

“ Would you then yield yourself up, my love, to the trial ?”

“ Oh no, no ! Anything but that ; my senses would never hold : but to be hidden anywhere ——”

She paused, and looking into the duchess's face, saw so much embarrassment mingled with the gentlest pity and anxiety, as instantly recalled to her recollection how difficult and dangerous was the task she was about to impose upon her indulgent friend ; and her own generous feelings prompting her, not only to suffer everything herself rather than involve her in farther trouble, but even to spare her the pain of a refusal, she eagerly revoked the hasty wish she had uttered ; and only making the duchess repeat over and over again her promise of writing to her as frequently as was possible, she promised and determined to do all in her power to remain contentedly where she had found such timely refuge, until some turn in her fate should either enable or oblige her to leave it with propriety.

“ But I shall see you again, dear duchess, before you go ? ” she repeated, still clinging to her, while tears, which she found it impossible to restrain, fell fast from her eyes.

“ You shall, my love, and frequently, I hope. Our movements are seldom as rapid as we ourselves propose. Dry your tears, my sweet Gertrude, and remember that your remaining here is only a matter of prudence after all, and for your own sake : but it *can* be revoked, and *shall* be,” she added soothingly and affectionately, all scruples of expediency and caution overcome by Gertrude’s air of gentle resignation, “ if you continue really to wish it.”

“ Thank you, thank you, my dear kind friend, for that word ; it is as judicious as it is kind ; for, to an ardent temperament like mine, the idea that you *can* escape when you please renders anything endurable.”

And Gertrude, true to her own generous—and, may we not call it heroic ?—nature, resolved that, were it only for the sake of that

kind word, she would not abuse the duchess's indulgent consideration.

“ But, alas ! if it is true that many an evil thought and many a guilty wish are smothered in their very birth, who cannot also bear witness to many a high resolve and generous purpose that have been driven back upon the heart, or to which the opportunity for exercise has been denied ? And yet they who feel indignant or sorrowful when such has been the case, do perhaps but reap the bitter fruits of corrupted seed ; for it belongs not to degraded man to triumph in a lofty sentiment—there is no such thing for him. God made us perfect ; we have debased ourselves ; our loftiest aspirings are then but so much of our original nature, of the “ order of things,” unspoilt ; and to lament the loss of an opportunity for displaying them, is to lament that something has not gone wrong that we might rectify it ; and not very unlike the Irishman's wish, that his friend had been drowned that he might have had the pleasure of plunging into the

water to rescue him ! That all things should work together for the "universal good," is all the benevolence that man should pretend to ; and to do his part humbly, meekly, and zealously, as one avoiding negligence in repairing the disorder that he or his fellow-men have wrought, should be the end of his endeavours. To look for a higher station, or a better sounding office, is indeed the mark of a fallen nature ; it is taking our standard from the nature to which we have fallen, instead of from that from which we had our noble origin. There are, however, two classes prone to this error, who are in their natures as opposite as light and darkness, as life and death : the one is the spiritually proud, who say to their neighbours, "Stand aside, I am holier than thou !"—the other is the young and the warm-hearted, who say to the afflicted, "Come to me and I will bind up thy wounds ; and would that they were ten thousand times more loathsome, that thou mightst see that whilst every one else turned away disgusted, I would

sit by thee and dress them still." Now, while to the eye—ay, and to the heart of man, the latter class is the gentlest, the most amiable—perhaps the most loveable of any that exists, and the former perhaps the most revolting; whilst the latter is one that ameliorates our nature and softens its afflictions, while the former aggravates its asperities, and draws ill-will on religion itself; yet am I of opinion that they are equally the signs of a fallen nature. By equally, I mean that one shows it as clearly as the other, although so much of good be mingled with the one, while the other has not one redeeming trait, unless it plead its cold and selfish bigotry as such. I believe that the brave sentinel, who is placed to guard the outposts of the camp, would as soon think of claiming credit for not "doing his work negligently," though his own life were to be the forfeit of that negligence, as a real Christian would, for all that he can do, in the short space of his existence, to assuage or ward off the evils we

have brought upon ourselves ; and that the one, when the battle is raging around him, might as rationally seek for some little separated spot where he could prove his own little prowess, while kingdoms are hanging on the result of the general *mêlée*, and expect credit for the same, with all its petty selfishness, as the Christian to seek for occasions to display extraordinary qualities of any kind ; with this difference only ; that glory being the soldier's meed, to seek it is his profession ; while humility being the passport to heaven, is the only unfailing sign of a regenerated nature. But whither have we wandered from poor Gertrude ? who, if she was not now the humblest of human beings, only yielded to a glad sensation in any generous resolve from the very warmth and energy of her young heart. Even that, however, was to be tempered ; and before Time effected that process with his cold wing, whose indiscriminating influence is generally extended over every feeling of our nature, she was destined to learn that

lesson, so difficult to the springing-time of life, —to be content to “do no wrong;” not as weak mortals use the words, but in the extended sense of the Scriptures.

Gertrude, we have already said, was from the first indulged in a degree of liberty about the palace and its princely domains, that was not permitted to the more formal members of the household; and, as no one felt it their duty to instruct her too rigidly in the ceremonial observances, or etiquette attending her situation, she frequently wandered about at hours, and into places, which by others were deemed sacred to the pleasure or the privacy of the imperial family.

There was one spot in particular, at a considerable distance from the house, where she delighted to pass whole hours together, both on account of the beauty of the place itself, and because, when there, she felt sheltered alike from the rays of the mid-day sun, and from the intrusion of any human being. It is true, there

was an ornamented walk, tended with the utmost care, leading to this seclusion; but this walk Gertrude always shunned, and contrived to arrive at her favourite haunt by one, which, overgrown with grass and brushwood, seemed to have been long forsaken for its newer neighbour. The spot itself was a sort of circular chamber, if it might be termed such, cleared out amidst dark and lofty trees, the close embowering branches of which, while they suffered the grass to grow rank, dense, and dark beneath their moisture, seldom permitted the cheerful rays of the summer's sun to penetrate; and while the gnarled trunk of one lofty lord of the surrounding forest had been bowed to form a rustic arm-chair, and the branches interlaced composed a canopy above, so admirable was the taste displayed in all, that the mind almost refused to believe that it was the work of art, and not the dwelling of some spirit of the woods.

There were, however, signs that could not

be mistaken of the ingenuity of man. As you sat within the fairy circle, the sound of dashing water fell continuously upon the ear ; and when you rose to seek the fairy fount, behold ! the splendid but artificial *jet d'eau*, tumbling in a thousand fanciful forms of silver spray, met your—shall I say ?— disappointed gaze.

Disappointment at least to Gertrude it certainly was, when, after having frequently enjoyed the lulling sound without sufficient curiosity to ascertain whence it proceeded, she at last ventured from her hiding-place to seek its source ; and perceived, what told in language that could not be mistaken, that others besides herself had loved her favourite spot. The unwelcome story was still more fully confirmed by the splendid bath-house and the odoriferous shrubs that she now discovered ; and, above all, because of the trouble and expense that attend the importing, and preservation of them, in a climate where the winter is so inimical to their bright feathers and musical voices, by the

assemblage of beautiful singing-birds that she saw fluttering and chirping about.

Her first timid feeling on this discovery was to fly; her first exclamation, "this is no place for me:" but when returned to the sylvan vestibule, which was at a short distance from the gay scene we have just described, its gloom again seemed as congenial to her spirit as before; she recollected too, that, frequently as she had already visited it, never yet had its solitude been disturbed save by herself; and as the baths, though magnificent in design, and considerably advanced in execution, were evidently unfinished, and yet no workmen having ever been employed there since her arrival, she began to flatter herself that the purpose, whatever it had been, was now abandoned, probably through some caprice of satiated taste and luxury, and that all that now alarmed her would soon become as wild and deserted as the path by which she was in the habit of stealing thither.

Still the alarm she had experienced was suf-

ficient to prevent her return for some days ; and the next time she ventured to visit it, was one day after her light dinner, at which time she was in the habit of wandering about the grounds, whilst she knew the empress to be engaged at hers. She had never, indeed, ventured so far from the palace at that hour before ; but the evening was particularly tempting, and it was so much longer than usual since she had seen her favourite haunt, that she strayed on until she arrived there almost unconsciously.

She seated herself mechanically in her rustic chair, and sank into the melancholy musing which the place was at all times calculated to inspire, but which with Gertrude was now almost a second nature. Escaped from her cruel husband, and the fear of discovery having a good deal subsided, her musing had of late lost much of the gloom and bitterness that once accompanied it ; and she used even to look forward, with a sort of soothing anticipation, to the hour for repairing to a scene that seemed formed for

quiet, and repose of mind : but she had never visited it in the evening before ; and though, as we have said, that evening was one of particular loveliness and brightness, so deep and impenetrable was the shade of the trees around her, that night seemed suddenly to have fallen upon the earth. Whether it was owing to that circumstance altogether, or to the heavy dewy breath that foliage and herbs give out in the summer evenings, and which, all delicious as it is, is sometimes oppressive to those of weak spirits, or whether to some predisposing state of her nerves, she could not perhaps herself have told ; but so it was, that she had not been seated many minutes there before she felt a chill creeping over her spirits, and painful recollections began to throng too thickly upon her. The hour—and some undefinable, perhaps imaginary similitude in the atmosphere and scene, recalled to her recollection—first Beauton itself—then particular places there—associations connected with them—hours—days—evenings—

and finally—the fatal and the last. Irresistibly, and as if spell-bound, she dwelt upon its fearful memories with a vivid distinctness, that—alone and separated as she was from the world in that lone wilderness—affected her spirits with a gloom and an oppression, that, in all her variety of suffering, she had never before experienced. For the first time she suffered herself to doubt in what spirit her sainted brother looked down upon her now, and she felt that a frightful terror was taking hold upon her. Presently her limbs grew cold, and her heart seemed to cease its pulsations. To rise and fly was her first impulse ; but she felt, what all, in similar nervous paroxysms, I suppose, have felt ; namely, that to make the effort would deprive her of the little presence of mind that remained, and that, if her feet performed their office at all, it must be to bear her shrieking to the palace. Still, her terror was every moment augmenting ; and she was now shuddering, as persons sometimes do before they faint.

In her extremity she had recourse, as usual, to prayer. She sank down upon her knees with as little movement as was possible, feeling that the very rustling of her clothes would jar upon her excited nerves; and desperately burying her face in her hands, in the hope that, by shutting out the objects by which she was surrounded, she could shut out their effects, she endeavoured to form a prayer to be relieved from the gloom that had fallen upon her spirit. The most perfect stillness was around, and even the little birds had betaken themselves to the aviaries and various devices that were contrived to allure them to that spot. Gertrude was compelled to restrain even her own palpitating breathing, so fearful did it sound in that stillness.

But hark! even while yet her short aspiration is unfinished, she hears a rustle—a step—it is close beside her—in a frenzy of terror she looks up—and, standing about a yard distant

from her, she sees a gentleman, and a stranger. A moment before, the sight might have been welcome as that of an angel; but now, her nervous excitement had gained too much power over her strength,—he appeared too suddenly before her,—and no sooner did she behold him than, uttering a low and smothered shriek, she fell fainting at his feet.

The gentleman sprang to her assistance, and caught her in his arms as she fell; and fearful as was her alarm, it did not exceed in intensity the astonishment that took possession of him, when he beheld the exquisitely beautiful young creature, whom the sight of him (for in no other way could he account for it) had nearly, if not entirely, deprived of life. He saw at once that she was an English woman, which did not tend to solve the mystery; and knew enough of our customs to be aware that she wore a widow's dress. So young, so beautiful, so refined and distinguished-looking, even in her insensible

state, who could she be ? or what had brought her to wander in the grounds of the imperial residence, alone and at such an hour ?

But although these questions passed rapidly through his mind, he did not pause to give them utterance even in exclamations ; but, raising Gertrude in his arms, he carried her to where the waters were playing, and, suffering some sprinkles to fall upon her face, he chafed her hands, loosened the strings of her bonnet, and, not being very expert at the employment, pulled off her widow's cap at the same time, by which means the comb which supported her fine hair fell out; and when, after a few moments, she opened her eyes, she found herself reclining against the breast of a gentleman whom she had never beheld before, and whose arms, breast, and shoulder were all shaded over with her flowing tresses. So complete had been her nervous exhaustion, that it was some minutes before she could recover herself sufficiently to rise from his encircling arms, or even summon

recollection sufficient to think where she was or what had befallen her.

The moment, however, that she was able to make the effort, though still trembling, shocked, and bewildered at all that had passed, she eagerly exclaimed,

“ Pray tell me, for God’s sake, who you are, and how you came so suddenly before me ? Have I been long ill ? ”

The gentleman smiled gently.

“ Compose yourself,” he said, “ I am no bandit. If you recollect, the grass around where you sat is particularly soft : when I was near enough to distinguish a lady in the attitude of prayer, my step could not reach your ear ; and my curiosity was so much excited by the sight, in such a place, at such an hour, that I will not deny that I might have stepped more cautiously forwards then, partly indeed fearful of disturbing your devotions.”

“ But who are you ? ” repeated Gertrude, whose bewilderment and agitation had no

yet sufficiently subsided to allow her to think of conventional etiquette. "Who are you? Are you any one who can accompany me back to the palace? for I am too ill and too nervous to attempt to go alone!"

"To the palace!" the gentleman repeated in increasing astonishment; and forgetting Gertrude's curiosity in his own, he exclaimed in his turn, "Who then are you? Can it be that you are ——?" He paused.

"*Who?*" screamed poor Gertrude, with a look of such sudden dismay as must at once have betrayed her to any one interested in her apprehension.

Happily, the gentleman had never even heard of the circumstances attending her, and therefore merely gazing on her in fresh astonishment, he answered, "Nay, don't be alarmed; it is *I* who have cause to fear to offend, if I venture to ask if the empress is so happy as to number you in her household?"

This question, together with the gentlemanly

address and noble air of the handsome stranger, might have served fully to reassure any one whose nerves were in better order, or whose imagination was more under the control of their judgment, than those of Gertrude were at that moment. But, as in her, the fear of being discovered and dragged before the world on the frightful charge that hung over her, had only subsided in her utter seclusion, the sight of a stranger was at any moment sufficient to recall it; and now, in the lone evening, far from the palace, far from aid of any kind, Vandeleur in England, the duchess preparing to leave Russia—all this rushed upon her mind at once, and completely deprived her of all sense save of instant apprehension. She suddenly, from the very force of terror, recovered strength sufficient to spring up from the green knoll on which she had hitherto been sitting, and stood before her astonished companion a monument of silent but gasping terror.

The gentleman, who had also till then re-

mained seated beside her, now sprang up likewise, confounded by her sudden and violent emotion, and they stood confronting each other in silence for an instant, each under the influence of their own sensations. The gentleman, however, perceiving that her terror seemed every moment increasing, and utterly unconscious of the cause, advanced towards her in the hope of soothing or removing it ; but he was deterred from his purpose by her wildly clasping her hands together, and with a countenance of the most piteous entreaty repeating, " Oh, spare me ! for God's sake, spare me ! and if you would not see me die at your feet, tell me who or what you are, and what you want with me ? "

" I beseech of you, lady, to compose yourself," he replied in a low and soothing voice ; and at the same time moving a little nearer to her, as if feeling that that tone must reassure her, " compose yourself, and believe that I am at a loss to conceive how I can have terrified you thus, chance only having brought me

to your presence : but if nothing but my name will convince you that I am no midnight murderer, you shall not ask it again ;” and taking her hand between both his, with a look and manner so gentle, and even tender, that she could not reject it, he bent his head, and said in a kind of whisper, “ I am—ALEXANDER.”

“ Alexander ! good heavens ! not the emperor ?” she hurriedly exclaimed, gazing wildly on him, while conviction followed fast upon the words as she herself repeated them ; and she felt at once that all that had seemed strange, unusual, and almost oppressive to her in the condescending familiarity of his manner, was thus happily and graciously accounted for.

“ Yes, the emperor of all the Russias !” he replied, smiling at her vehement and inartificial exclamation, “ but *your* most devoted servant.”

Gertrude instantly felt the necessity of endeavouring to collect her senses from the abandonment in which she had hitherto rather suf-

ferred them to indulge, and would have bent her knee ; but the emperor, gracefully restraining her, begged of her once more to satisfy his curiosity, as far as might not be disagreeable to her. The entreaty was a painful one, for she was not an adept in falsehood, or even in what is considered allowable disguise. She hesitated and stammered ; and at last, bursting into tears, said she was a very unhappy creature, who had met with much and trying misfortunes, and that the Duchess of Castleton had made interest with the empress, to take her into her service.

“ How long ago ? and how is it that I have never had the happiness of seeing you before ? ”

Gertrude informed him.

“ Well, now that Fortune has favoured me more than you or the empress were disposed to do, I hope you will allow me to profit by my chance, and to assist her in offering you all the consolation in our power. In the mean time,

now that you see I am no wolf in human form, or whatever other monster your fancy conjured up, will you resume your seat until you are more perfectly recovered ?” and he took her hand to replace her on that from which she had so hastily risen ; but as she was already sufficiently recovered to attempt to walk, and felt no desire whatever to prolong the embarrassing interview, she expressed anxiety not to trespass longer upon his majesty, adding with a deep blush, as she glanced at her bonnet, which still lay on the grass, though she had hastily folded up her hair again in her cap, “ that she feared she had already put his kindness and good-nature to too severe a test ; but she was *so* frightened !”

“ But what frightened you, my fair mysterious ? My vanity is not relieved on that subject yet, I assure you. I may have frightened men in my time, but I never knew I was so hideous as to cause women to faint.”

Gertrude could not help smiling at this man-

ner of accounting for her illness, especially as she now had had leisure and composure enough to notice the very handsome, though (when not softened, as at present) somewhat stern features of Alexander, whose figure also was so noble as to cause him to be considered one of the finest men in his own vast dominions.

“ It did not require ugliness to frighten me at that moment, as I need not tell your majesty,” she said, with a smile and a blush of such engaging simplicity that it seemed almost playful, and Alexander felt it to be the sweetest compliment he had ever received ; “ but my mind was oppressed and shaken at the moment with such fearful recollections, that an angel would have probably met the same reception from me.”

“ That I could have still less conceived,” said Alexander, “ as we are seldom scared at our own images ; but why do you fasten on your bonnet ? the evening is so lovely ! but, per-

haps, I have intruded upon you, and still annoy you by my presence ?”

“ Oh, no !” she exclaimed hastily, a slight return of vague alarm flashing over her as she thought of being left alone again in that secluded, gloomy, though most lovely little wilderness of taste. “ Oh, no ; indeed I do not wish to remain longer, evening is rapidly advancing !”

“ But you said you were afraid to return alone,” said the emperor smiling ; “ and as I have not yet enjoyed the ramble I came out for, or seen what progress they have made during my absence in my new baths here, if you will not accompany me, either you must return alone, at the mercy of all envious sprites, or I must give up my purposed pleasure. Which is to be ?”

“ Surely not the latter,” replied Gertrude ; “ every moment I am getting better ; and now I shall respectfully and gratefully take permission

to leave your majesty to pursue your walk;" and curtsying low, she was turning to depart, when Alexander, who was infinitely struck with her beauty, grace, and *naïveté*, exclaimed,

"Nay then, since *you* are so perverse, *I* must yield; and, after all, it is but resigning a lesser for a greater pleasure, though, miser-like, I wished to have grasped both; but come, you must reward me by letting me be of some use. You must lean upon my arm, as you are not yet strong enough to walk alone."

Gertrude would have excused herself from this, but the emperor would not be denied; and they proceeded towards the palace by the new path, which Gertrude had hitherto carefully avoided.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Have I with all my full affections
Still met the king ? loved him next Heaven ? obeyed him
Been, out of fondness, superstitious to him ?
Almost forgot my prayers, to content him ?
And am I thus rewarded ?
Bring me a constant woman to her husband,
One that ne'er dream'd a joy beyond his pleasure ;
And to that woman, when she has done most,
Yet will I add an honour,—a great patience.

Henry VIII.

IN their walk homewards the emperor did not again revert to his curiosity as to who Gertrude could be, or under what circumstances she had become an inmate of the imperial palace. There evidently was some mystery connected with it which he could not guess at, and which she was unwilling to explain ; but he satisfied

himself for the present with a determination to learn all from Elizabeth herself.

In the mean time he endeavoured to draw Gertrude into conversation on various topics; and she, deeply sensible of his kindness and condescension throughout the whole adventure, felt it incumbent on her, whilst in his company, to struggle against her usual taciturnity and abstraction. The very anxiety not to appear ungrateful, lent to her manner a softness, and an appearance of interest in all he said, which, satiated as he might well have been by the adulations of millions upon millions, came to his feelings with a gracious freshness that he felt to be delicious. There was not, indeed, in her conversation either the brilliancy of wit, or the display of erudition, nor yet the specious seeming which constant association with polished society can give to airy nothings: but there was instead, much native intelligence, some judicious cultivation, though much of wild luxuriance; and there broke out,

every now and then, little light emanations, which showed a naturally vivid and lively mind ; while over all was diffused a degree of native elegance, refinement, and simplicity, which the emperor seldom had seen so happily blended together, and which he was fully capable of appreciating. He became every moment more and more pleased and interested in his young companion, and began to exert himself to please in his turn. He spoke of his visit to England, and gave her several amusing and interesting anecdotes respecting it ; he spoke of the preceding war, and Gertrude listened as attentively as if she had expected that some of his anecdotes were to particularize Vandeleur himself : but Alexander guessed not this motive for her willing attention ; and, gay and good-humoured, he proceeded from subject to subject, until Gertrude was absolutely, and probably for the first time since the fatal event occurred, cheated into forgetfulness of her misfortunes.

Mutually pleased, they were proceeding at

a slow and protracted pace, when, as they made an abrupt turn from one shaded path into another more open one, which led directly to one of the private entrances through the empress's favourite pleasure-gardens, they met Elizabeth herself, with one or two of her ladies, sauntering in the same direction, tempted out by the beauty of the evening. Words cannot express the amazement she experienced at encountering her broken-hearted and concealed protégée familiarly leaning upon the arm of the emperor, and listening with so much pleased attention to his animated conversation, that it was some minutes before either the speaker or the listener became aware that they were not alone.

No sooner, however, did Gertrude look up, and perceive Elizabeth within a few paces of her, than she was struck with the look of cold, and evidently displeased surprise, which had taken possession of her countenance; and in an instant struck back into all the miseries of her own situation, she became so overwhelmed

with the sudden transition from her momentary enjoyment, that the animated and open explanation, which a moment before she should have been able to have given of her late adventure, died upon her lips, and she stood in confused silence, trusting that the emperor would himself explain it; but he too, whether he had also perceived the expression of Elizabeth's countenance, or whether he did not choose to seem as if he thought any explanation could be deemed necessary for an intimacy which he perhaps wished should appear as a matter of course,—whatever the reason might have been,—he remained perfectly silent, and the empress herself was the first to speak.

“We sought your majesty,” she said, “hearing you had wandered hitherwards alone, to offer you our company, not being aware that you were already provided with a companion.”

“My having found a companion,” Alexander gaily answered, “was more the effect of good fortune than good intention on my part; and

for this lady, as she will not I fear acknowledge the good luck, and is too honest to claim the good intention, I believe she must have recourse to simple chance and her own good taste, which led her to the prettiest spot in all these grounds, and where I found her in a death-struggle with the guardian spirits of the place, who were envious at seeing it possessed by any one fairer than themselves. I, however, like a true knight, stept in to the rescue, and have now the pleasure of restoring her safe into your majesty's hands ;" and, so saying, he yielded to the attempt of Gertrude to withdraw her arm from his, which he had hitherto resisted.

Elizabeth, though still in perplexity and astonishment at the sudden intimacy, aware as she was that the parties had never met before, felt she had no excuse for evincing farther displeasure, and merely observing, " Your majesty has become quite poetic in your compliments since your late visits to Paris,"

accepted the arm which Alexander now offered her.

Gertrude in the mean time was seized upon by the ladies who had accompanied the empress, and obliged to give the most minute account of the whole occurrence: and, though already properly aware of the kindness and condescension of the emperor, it was only from their comments that she learned the full extent of how highly she had been favoured, and one or two hints, thrown out perhaps maliciously, of the weakness attributed to the empress, soon succeeded in dispelling anything that remained of satisfaction in her mind from the interview.

She felt indeed so terrified and disgusted at the new ideas suggested to her, and so dejected at the fate that seemed to pursue her on all sides, turn where she might, that she pleaded indisposition, and did not leave her room for the two or three succeeding days.

In the mean time the emperor returned to St.

Petersburgh ; and, when Gertrude reappeared, Elizabeth's manner towards her had resumed all its usual kindness and gentleness. The empress was indeed intrinsically amiable ; and if she suffered from a failing to which so many who have warm affections have been victims, it was perhaps more a subject of pity than of blame, especially as, when at its most painful crisis, it led in her gentle breast to no step more violent or undignified than the withdrawing of herself from the court of her husband for some time, and retiring to that of her royal father.

Gertrude often longed extremely to ask whether the emperor had made any inquiries concerning her, and how far Elizabeth had thought fit to confide in him : it could not but be deeply interesting to her to know ; yet was there some feeling, inspired probably by the hints of the two gossiping ladies, that always prevented her from naming the emperor and herself together, especially as she could not but observe that Elizabeth

never again alluded to that evening's adventure, or made a further comment upon the subject.

Several days passed over before Gertrude happened by any accident to see the emperor again ; and it might have been a fortnight after the first adventure, that as she sat one evening at the open window of an apartment on the ground-floor, which she particularly enjoyed because of its being at the least ornamented and least frequented part of the palace, and opened on a pretty but neglected little flower-garden, she was startled and surprised to see the emperor himself enter the little enclosure, closing behind him its fanciful gate.

Her first movement was to draw her head back from the window ; and, as she hoped he had not perceived her, she softly rose and was about to steal from the apartment : before she reached the door, however, Alexander was already at the window, and looking in, requested her to return ; she had no excuse for refusing to obey him, and he sprang into the room from where

he stood, and, taking her hand, led her to a seat, and inquired in the kindest and most respectful manner after her health; expressing regret at her recent indisposition, of which he had been informed.

“ I fear you caught cold on that evening when I had first the pleasure of meeting you,” he said, and fixed his eyes on her with a look of such penetration as brought a blush into her cheek; it seemed to her to ask so plainly whether her indisposition were real, or only assumed in compliance with a hint from the empress.

She hastened to disabuse him of that surmise, without betraying her consciousness of it, and mentioned, as the probable cause of her illness, the unhappy state of her mind, which every trifle now painfully agitated.

The emperor regarded her with compassion.

“ I am aware of your sad story,” he said in a low, solemn, and very feeling tone. “ Why do

you start so fearfully, and become pale? Do you think me capable of injuring you? For God's sake, compose yourself; you are terrified, you are going to faint again: let me support you."

But she was not going to faint; and, gently rejecting his support, she leaned her head upon her hand, and large tears fell from her eyes.

Alexander was affected; he was good-natured and kind-hearted on any sudden occasion, and taking the handkerchief which lay upon her lap, he himself, ere she could prevent it, applied it to her eyes. Her evil star was still in the ascendant; at that very moment while Alexander was with one hand drying the tears from her cheeks, and with the other gently holding down hers, which would have prevented him, the Empress Elizabeth, guided thither doubtless by some presentiment in her own breast, suddenly but softly opened the door of the apartment. She stood for one moment as

if petrified at the sight she beheld ; then instantly closing it, without uttering a word, retired.

Words could not do justice to the horror that instantly took possession of Gertrude ; all that the ladies of the court had hinted to her, all that she had herself felt by woman's sympathy of what Elizabeth's feelings must be, rushed upon her mind at once, and, leaning back in her chair, she uttered the words " I am lost ! "

Alexander, who himself was for a moment confounded, not from any consciousness of guilt, for he had not the slightest reason for such consciousness, but merely from his knowledge of the foible of the empress, and the *contretems* of her opening the door at that moment, now felt the necessity of concealing such feelings from his companion, and, wishing to soothe her, was about to take her hand again, when, starting from him and from her chair, she fled from the room before he had the power to prevent her, and, rushing along the suite of apartments

through which she knew the empress must have passed; she never paused until she overtook her, and, forgetting all fortuitous distinctions of rank and etiquette in the alarm of the moment, seized her by the dress, and gasped a moment to recover her breath.

The empress, utterly unused to such a mode of address, screamed with alarm; and, had she not purposely come on her jealous quest by a way where she was not likely to meet any of her attendants, the uproar might have been unpleasant. As it was, Gertrude, not however relinquishing her hold, lest the empress should escape her, fell upon her knees; and, her whole soul speaking in her eyes and countenance, exclaimed,

“ You *must* hear me, empress! I know what mischief has often ensued for want of a timely explanation; this must plead my apology. I know what you think of me, and how you feel to me at this moment: but as I hope to see heaven; as I hope, O, Empress! to see

him whom I sent there before his time ; you wrong me cruelly, you wrong yourself, you wrong the emperor. It has all been accidental, unavoidable, however odd it may have appeared to you. I always wished to have explained to you how the first meeting took place ; but you never mentioned the subject to me, and I was ashamed to introduce it." She stopped, and gazed eagerly and anxiously in the empress's face.

Elizabeth, the infirmity of whose temper could not overcome her kind and candid disposition, perceived in one moment the force of truth in what Gertrude asserted, as far at least as it concerned herself. Of the emperor's feelings she still believed, with that fatal determination that ever clings to the jealous, that she herself was the best judge.

She raised Gertrude kindly from the posture she had in her energetic appeal assumed ; and hesitating for a moment how to reply to her, between her sense of queenly dignity and her

feelings as a gentle and obliged woman, she gave way to the latter, and, gracefully laying her hand upon Gertrude's head, she said, " I believe you, and I thank you. You have seen my weakness, you must hear my apology ;" and taking her arm, she led her into an apartment, the door of which they had already reached.

Gertrude trembling excessively, both from the alarm she had experienced, and from witnessing the emotion of the empress, stood before her in very unpleasant anticipation of what was to follow ; for, young as she was, she knew it was ever accounted a dangerous distinction to be the repository of the secrets of princes ; moreover, she felt sorry to see the empress, whom she loved and respected, stoop to excuse herself by criminating her husband, where the burden of blame to be borne must be so disproportioned. In this spirit she would have remonstrated ; but Elizabeth was too eager to hear her, and proceeded to pour into her unwilling ears a little history of fears and feelings that at least tended

as much to show her own predisposition to be alarmed, as any faults on the part of her husband.

Gertrude, forgetful for the moment of her own precarious position, or in her artlessness imagining that any unpleasant suspicion was for ever removed because the empress was satisfied for the moment, felt unaffected sorrow to find how one unhappy failing of temper, not even amounting to a moral wrong, may have the power to blight the happiness of two persons apparently in possession of every thing that the heart of man or woman could desire. Elizabeth perceived her melancholy dejection, and, attributing it to sympathy in her own sorrows, felt more pleased and satisfied with her than ever ; and now believing that she really had wronged even the emperor by her momentary suspicions, she generously resolved to remove the impression it might have left upon his mind, by voluntarily bringing Gertrude more into his society, and

even affording him opportunities of conversing with her.

With a mind, the general constitution of which was unimpaired, and naturally healthy and vigorous, though some accidental blemish may for a moment have disfigured it, such a course might have been judicious and successful; but as there is no point that puts the physician's skill to a nicer test than to pronounce when an operation may be salutary, or the contrary, so does it require a thorough knowledge of oneself, or others, to ascertain beforehand, what degree of temptation or provocation we may brave or bear.

Accordingly, although the plan resorted to by Elizabeth might in many cases have succeeded in restoring health and vigour to the mind; to hers, amiable but facile, gentle but enfeebled by long habits of indulgence in tender sorrows, whether real or imaginary, the trial was too severe. She struggled carefully as long as it

might be possible to conceal from Gertrude the uneasiness she suffered ; but the wound only festered the more bitterly within. While the latter, from the perfect propriety and even respectful kindness of the emperor's conduct towards her, together with Elizabeth's seeming confidence, which she innocently believed to be sincere, lost all fears of future annoyance, and perhaps partly unconsciously, but also as hoping by that means more fully to reassure the empress, laid aside all her assumed reserve and much of her depression when enjoying his agreeable society. One more skilled in human nature would have probably seen at once through the disguise the unfortunate empress imposed upon her own feelings ; but, though Gertrude's sympathy was ever remarkably acute, she was herself so frank, so ingenuous, so incapable of all "seeming," that she had not yet learned to trust her own perceptions against the assertions of others ; and to Elizabeth's particular failing, it so happened, that she was by nature a perfect

stranger, never having for one moment experienced it in the slightest degree. Had it been otherwise, she had perhaps been more constantly on her guard, and might not have found necessary the serious measure she finally adopted to repair her error when she discovered it.

CHAPTER XXV.

Fate is behind the scenes : she holds the strings
That rule the motions of this shifting show ;
Fear, love, and hate, counsel and accident,
These hath she gathered in a hidden coil,
No man thereof may spy the intricate ends.
So we are moved to aims we deem not of.

The Lord of Malfy.

It was a very few days before that on which the Duke and Duchess of Castleton were to leave St. Petersburg on their return to England, that late one evening a note was handed to the duchess by one of her attendants, who informed her that it was given to him by a poor English woman who waited for an answer. The duchess ran her eye hastily over the contents, and, unable to suppress an exclamation of surprise, desired

that the woman should be shown to her dressing-room.

"My dear love," said the duke, who was present at the time, "why give yourself the trouble of seeing every one who chooses to apply to you for charity? Can you not order something to be given to her?"

"I must see this person," said the duchess. "I believe it is a poor creature who wants our protection to England."

"But you know we are not going direct to England. You know we have determined on making a little tour through Switzerland and Italy."

"Still we may be able to afford her some assistance in leaving this country, and I cannot refuse to see her."

The duke yawned and was silent, accustomed to yield without much remonstrance or inquiry to his wife's active offices of benevolence, to which, to do him justice, he seldom objected to contribute as far as any sum of money

which she in her prudence ever requested from him.

The duchess hurried to her dressing-room ; and there awaiting her, wrapped in a cloak such as the peasant women of Russia wear, she found Gertrude. She did not perhaps feel as much alarm, but certainly not less surprise, than when, on a former occasion the same person presented herself before her an utter stranger.

“ In the name of Heaven, Gertrude, what has happened to you ? How are you from the palace in this disguise ? Has anything befallen the empress ? ”

“ You must sit down, my dearest duchess, and hear me circumstantially ; and then I trust, even if you think I have acted hastily, you will at least not call it imprudently.”

The duchess sat down at her request, though very much doubting in her own mind, as people generally do when startled, that she should wholly acquit her of imprudence ; but, as she forbore to express this doubt, Gertrude pro-

ceeded to inform her of what she had hitherto suppressed from respect to her august mistress, viz. the first symptoms she perceived of her jealousy, how it was repeated, then abjured, and finally renewed in a manner which neither Gertrude's feelings nor judgment could allow her to endure any longer. It took place the very morning of that day. It appeared that, for some little time past, the emperor, encouraged by Gertrude's innocent and confiding manner, had gradually become more and more kind, and even tender, in his attentions to her ; and had made her several elegant little presents, which, as she always carried them on the instant to the empress for her approval, she felt no necessity of ungraciously declining, although perfectly convinced in her own mind that to her they must ever be utterly valueless, either intrinsically or even as tokens of his regard. He had once or twice joined her too in her rambles through the demesnes ; but, as latterly she had never been tempted to wander far, it had hitherto happened

that he was never able to contrive to follow her until she was near the house on her return, and then any excuse served her to leave him almost instantly : indeed, he himself, though evidently disappointed, did not on these occasions attempt to detain her, but, on the contrary, seemed to approve of her prudence ; for though, in his admiration, and even increasing interest in the beautiful and unfortunate young stranger so curiously thrown upon his protection, there was as yet nothing to alarm his feelings or his conscience, yet, fully aware of the sensitive nature of his empress's affection, he was desirous to avoid awakening her alarm in the slightest degree. As, however, this wish was in the present instance founded on no better principle than to avoid any annoyance to himself or Gertrude, it was not likely to influence him beyond what the fear of detection might impose ; and accordingly, on the first opportunity that presented itself for indulging in Gertrude's

society unmolested, he hastened to avail himself of it.

The imperial family of Russia at all times observed early hours, particularly early rising ; and although the long day is a blessing only for the happy, and a necessity only for the busy, and although poor Gertrude now belonged to neither of these two classes, and found her hours of sleep the most endurable of her existence, still when the world,—and who may call their own little circle the world, if not the members of a royal court ?—when the world was astir about her, she could not be the only one to indulge in habits of indolence. Besides, she was always passionately fond of the fresh open air. Born and nurtured in a lovely country, far remote from the loaded atmosphere of a city, her pure and healthful constitution enjoyed—even, as it were, palpably enjoyed—the refreshing supplies of life that come prepared for our use from the vegetable world. The summers in Russia are love-

ly ; and now that the noon of summer had passed by, nothing could be more delightful than its gentle decline ; and when, one morning, Gertrude, happening to waken much earlier than usual, rose and looked out upon the luxuriant scene that spread far as her eye could reach, steeped in the delicious dew of early morning, and breathing of all the accumulated sweets that taste and fancy had collected there, she felt her very soul expand within her bosom with every breath she inhaled ; and, hastily performing her toilette, she stole from the house, determined, under favour of the early hour, to indulge herself in a longer ramble than of late she had attempted.

I dare say there is no one who has not remarked, though perhaps few can explain why it is so, that if one member of a family happens to waken earlier than usual, some other is likely to do so too : it may be owing perhaps to some atmospheric influence, or it may be caused by some occurrence of the preceding day, which, acting

alike on the nerves of each, was yet by each disregarded or forgotten. I know not whether it was owing to either of these *recherchées* causes, or whether to simple chance, that, upon the same morning on which Gertrude sprang from her couch with something like her former joyous waking, before her poor mind had time to recall the fearful reality of her fate, Alexander also rose before his usual hour ; and although Gertrude had wandered far away, even to the beautiful spot where she had first beheld him, before he left his dressing-room, as she lingered there enjoying some of the calmest if not happiest sensations she now had felt for many, many months, he, attracted first by her window open at so early an hour, and then tracing her small foot-prints in the dewy grass, was at her side before she even thought of returning.

She started at seeing him so early ; and blushed, she could scarcely have told why, at his finding her again in the place that was known to be particularly his favourite resort when he

wandered through the grounds, and which he had in a manner consecrated to himself by causing baths to be erected there for his own use. He smiled, with a gratified feeling, on her embarrassment, and softly whispered,

“ Is it the fascination of *terror* that attracts you here, where you suffered so much alarm from the sudden appearance of a monster ?”

“ No, sire : it is simply admiration of a place laid out and embellished with so much taste, together with thoughtless carelessness whither I bent my steps this lovely morning ; and indeed I feel I should apologise for intruding on the haunt that almost all others hold sacred to your majesty.”

“ Come, Gertrude, this is affectation : you are well aware that I consider this retreat, that I consider our palace, honoured and embellished by your presence. I wish to Heaven you would treat me more as a friend ; I wish you would open your heart to me, and converse freely upon your sorrows ; I am convinced it would relieve you to do so.”

"It is impossible, sire, quite impossible," she said, turning away her head, and shrinking, as she always did, from that subject.

"And why impossible? why do you turn away? do you never converse with the empress about it all? I am sure I take as much interest in you as she does."

"Never, I never do; I am unequal to speak on the subject, though it is never for a moment absent from my thoughts; and this lovely morning is the first time that I have thought upon it with anything short of despair. Do not, pray, force open the floodgates of my grief just now;" and she smiled a smile of such gentle pleading, as if enamoured of one moment of peace, that Alexander felt it to his soul, and, seizing her hand and kissing it, he exclaimed,

"I will not. I would sooner die than give you pain; let me be your companion for half-an-hour, and we shall discourse on everything that may amuse your mind."

Gertrude felt embarrassed and distressed:

she had no reason to assign for refusing this request of the emperor ; and yet some instinct, that is, some latent spark of judgment not yet quite smothered by our superadded and foreign habits, and which we are so apt to term *presentiment*, made her feel that there was imprudence, if not danger, in yielding to his request. She faltered and hesitated.

“ Have you any objection ? ” he asked emphatically, and with more of haughtiness than he was wont to assume towards her.

“ Objection, sire ! no ; certainly none to your society. How could it be ? ”

“ What is the matter then ? Is it—shall I guess ? ” and bending his head close to her he pronounced the words—“ the empress ? ”

Had he fired a pistol at Gertrude’s ear she could scarcely have felt more astounded, more bewildered, than by that low though emphatic whisper. She felt as if suddenly a gigantic barrier of propriety and reserve between her and the emperor had been demolished, and that

"the decent drapery of life had been rudely torn aside."

For a moment he stood as if enjoying her confusion ; then, recalling his better nature, he said more gaily,

"Come, come, Gertrude ; this is idle trifling between you and me. I would not say, I would not feel, anything disrespectful of the empress ; but you have lived too long with us not to know poor Elizabeth's failing, with how little cause I am sure you might yourself avouch, from the specimen you had of it one day before ; but come, she is not thinking of wakening yet, and as I flatter myself you not only have not, but never shall have, reason to regret the acquaintance commenced between us on this spot, I trust you will not represent the empress as less amiable than I know her to be, by making me suppose she would deprive me of the society of every agreeable woman."

"But, sire, without drawing on such feelings as you attribute to the empress, there

is a difference of rank and station to be observed."

"And who is to judge of the propriety of those distinctions? and when they are to be observed, and when dispensed with? Who creates and dissolves them at pleasure? the empress? you? or *me*? Come, once more come, Gertrude; do not put me out of humour with myself and everybody else this charming morning, which I came out to enjoy in a frame of mind very different;" and, so saying, he drew her arm within his; and although she did not dare to contradict him farther, yet there was a restraint and coldness diffused over her whole air and conversation, of which though Alexander could not exactly complain, he felt it to be unpleasant, and before long, without any request from her to that effect, he turned to retrace his steps to the palace; and, as they approached it, they had gradually sunk into total silence, and the emperor had yawned more than once.

To say that Gertrude did not observe this

change, would be to say that she had not observed his former pleasure in her company ; and not to say that she even saw in it what had been a subject of regret to many — to herself in other circumstances, were to say she had not the feelings and sympathies of woman : but that she not only did not lament it now, but even felt a stern and healthful satisfaction in it, even while tears rose to her eyes, is but as true as it is just to her prudence, and affectionate feeling towards the empress : and innocently satisfied with herself, and triumphant in her excellent principles, she waited on her royal mistress that morning in higher spirits than she had ever experienced since the happy days of her girlhood. But “ her doom had gone forth ; ” light spirits it seemed were never again to be her portion, and the slightest approach to them was sure to be followed by tenfold depression.

On entering the apartment of the empress, she perceived her brow was cloudy, and that her manner was cold and restrained. Still, as

Gertrude never felt more confident that she herself could in no way have caused this appearance, and even feeling that the change in Alexander's manner would, dared she to have hinted at it, have delighted the empress, the very consciousness of this enabled her for some time to rally and bear up against the empress's increasing depression.

She even ventured to say, "The emperor has been already walking this morning, madam." No answer was vouchsafed ; but the cloud grew deeper and darker, and a slight colour tinged the pale cheek. Then suddenly a thought, a painful thought, flashed across Gertrude's mind, and she determinately continued,

"I met his majesty in his ramble ; or, rather, he found me, as I had gone out first."

"A lucky chance !" the empress said in a tone that could not be mistaken.

Gertrude paused a moment ; then, with a beating heart, and in a gentle and mournful tone, asked the simple question, "How lucky, madam ?"

The empress cast a hasty, angry, and disdainful glance on her, and remained silent.

Gertrude stood in misery beside her, but it was misery that ought not to be endured.

“ You seem displeased with me, madam. Did I wrong in walking out this morning ? God knows how little I expected, how little I intended, to intrude upon the emperor.”

“ Gertrude, you are a hypocrite.”

“ I am not, dearest madam,” (bursting into an agony of tears,) “ but I am accursed of God and man ;” and wringing her hands she continued, “ there is a spell, a curse upon me, that I blight every one I wish to serve. Oh, madam, madam, pity and hear me : I have shunned my walks of late ; I have done everything to avoid seeing the emperor, except in your presence. I got up this morning at an hour when no one could have supposed him stirring ; and when ill-luck brought him upon me, I made myself so purposely disagreeable to him that I think he will never care to see me again.”

The empress hastily looked round in amazement at her. She was once more staggered in her suspicions of her falsity by this ingenuous and artless speech, which seemed to her jaundiced mind unconsciously to admit the emperor's evil designs, while it cleared her of participation in them.

"Then you mean to say, Gertrude, that you did not meet the emperor by appointment this morning?"

Gertrude held up her hands and raised her eyes in astonishment and despair.

"So help me Heaven! I did not, madam; but, on the contrary, chose the hour when I thought it impossible. Oh, dearest madam!" she exclaimed, suddenly altering her tone, and throwing herself on her knees before the empress, "once more rouse yourself from this fatal imagination. Do justice to yourself, to the emperor, and to me. You wrong us all, indeed you do, by these groundless alarms."

“Groundless ! alas ! alas !” exclaimed Elizabeth, her fine eyes filling with tears ; “no, Gertrude. Once more I believe in your innocence as yet ; but for the emperor, believe me I know the world better than you do.”

“To know the world, dearest, honoured madam, is not to know every individual and every circumstance in the world ; and some particular fact may fall under the knowledge of a child, while it is concealed from the oldest or the wisest ; and, believe me, the emperor is as incapable of wronging you as I am.”

“Gertrude, you distract me,” exclaimed the empress, suddenly clasping her hands on her ears. “You distract me by your praises, your defence of him. If you think of him thus, what is to save you ? and what must you think of me ? then what is to save *me* ? Oh ! I have long though secretly anticipated this,” and the unfortunate victim of jealousy bowed her head in her hands and wept.

Gertrude never felt so overwhelmed, so much

at a loss how to act or what to say. To offer further exculpation of the emperor were to increase the empress's apprehensions; and after a moment or two spent in silent despair, she sobbed out, "Oh, dearest madam, for God's sake recall your noble self; compose yourself, and reflect what is there to afflict you thus?"

"Alas! Gertrude, but too much. How could you know the emperor's heart as well as I do? He loves you, and I am miserable for ever. The more good, the more amiable you are, the more wretched am I; for indeed, indeed, I would not injure you."

Gertrude rose from her knees in calm despair at this speech. She stood in deep meditation for a moment; then came into her mind a resolution, which, in the course of the day, she found means to execute. It was to bid adieu for ever to the court where, in spite of her best endeavours, she only brought misery to its gentle mistress. She determined to leave it secretly, because she felt convinced that Eliza-

beth's generosity, together with her fears and shame at having the cause suspected, would have induced her to oppose her departure, at all events until she should probably have lost the opportunity of quitting Russia under the protection of the Duchess of Castleton, whose departure she knew was now close at hand.

Accordingly, writing an affectionate and most respectful letter to the empress, in which she stated her reasons for the step she was about to take, and begged permission to return, through her, the presents she had accepted from the emperor,—feeling that nothing could tend more to satisfy the alarmed wife,—she in the course of that day made her way from the palace, and being exceedingly energetic and intelligent when called upon to act decisively, she found means to procure a conveyance to the capital; and arriving in the evening, wrapped in a cloak which she purchased for the purpose, presented herself at the residence of the English ambassador.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Thus ever thus has been my wayward lot
To love and cherish those who loved me not.
Or, if by chance one genial heart I met,
Fate frowned and made it duty to forget.

ANONYMOUS.

SUCH was the tale which Gertrude now imparted to the duchess, who remained silent for several minutes after hearing it. She began really to think that misfortune had marked Gertrude for its own, and that no efforts of judgment or prudence would be able to counteract the baneful influence ; but, as this was not an idea congenial to her sanguine because energetic character, she rejected it immediately and exclaimed,

“ Well, my poor Gertrude, contrary, I will acknowledge, to my anticipations, you have indeed had sufficient cause for the step you have taken, if the means you adopted prove the most prudent ; and I do not say that under the circumstances they may not be so : but tell me now what you purpose doing with yourself ? ”

Gertrude looked down with hesitation in her countenance,—not the hesitation of irresolution, but of timidity,—in imposing yet farther trouble on her generous friend. The duchess took her hand.

“ Do not hesitate for a moment in making known your wishes to me. If you have, in consequence of all this, felt the desire of returning to England, tell me so, and I dare promise that I shall be able to hide you there where surmise could never reach you ; and the little tour we purpose making on our way home would recruit your spirits, and give you fresh strength to make the trial.”

“ Impossible ! it is quite impossible, my kind

and beloved friend !” sobbed Gertrude. “ I am better already than I believed I ever could have been had I lived a thousand years ; but not one iota am I altered in my original determination never to show myself in England again, or anywhere else where my sad story has been heard of. The brand of Cain is upon me, and it becomes me to hide my head.”

“ But, Gertrude, you should remember it is not there by the finger of God.”

“ Then with God I will retire, away from erring and misjudging man. There was but one hope I ever had, but that is at an end. I thought it just possible that Dr. C. might know that Herbert’s life was not in my hands ; but oh, duchess ! he died and made no sign !”

“ Gertrude, it is almost sinful for you to sorrow thus as over an intended crime.”

“ Nay, I do not. Had it been an intended crime, I had not dared to retire to the companionship of God and Herbert’s spirit.”

"To retire whither? what are your intentions?"

"Sometimes I regret that I was not brought up a Roman Catholic, as a convent would now be so fit a resting-place for me; but I intend—I intend—duchess," she said hesitating, and hiding her head upon the duchess's shoulder, "I intend to make a last trespass on your kindness."

"What is that?" asked the duchess, a little anxious from the enthusiastic tone which Gertrude had assumed.

"To suffer me to accompany you from hence to Switzerland, and there to take up my abode in some retired corner for the remainder of my days.

"But, my dear Gertrude, you are too young and lovely to be left thus in a strange country, without friends or protection. Would it not even be better to continue here, where you could if necessary claim the empress's countenance?"

To this Gertrude strongly objected. She did not like Russia or the Russian ladies. She could not think of passing the residue of her days amongst them, and she wished to settle herself somewhere from whence she never should have to remove again.

“There are, I know, cantons in Switzerland,” she said, “where the most primitive simplicity and good-will still exist; and for being quite alone, I have thought of a plan to obviate even that objection.”

The duchess inquired what it was. Gertrude mentioned Miss Wilson, and gave a sketch of her character.

“But, my dear Gertrude, by your account she would be a person rather to be taken care of, than to take care of you.”

“And I will take care of her in reality,” said Gertrude, “while she is old enough to afford the semblance of any protection I shall require; and, what may appear very strange, she is the only one of former days whom I

could endure to see. She will know what I feel, without grieving me by sympathising in my sorrow farther than just to suffer me to indulge it as I like; and her presence will take from me the sensation of utter loneliness of spirit, to which I have been so long a victim. Then her taciturnity and mechanical docility ensure me against her revealing my sad story to any one. In short, dear duchess, she combines all I now wish for in a companion who is yet not to be a friend."

The duchess, though she thought Gertrude's choice a little different from what her own, under such circumstances, would have been, with her usual liberality made allowance for the fancies of a sick heart, and was too well pleased to find that Gertrude would even suffer so slight a link to be introduced between her and the world, not to second her wishes in this respect. It was accordingly settled that the duchess should write immediately to Mrs. Vandeleur, and request of her, through her son, to have Miss Wil-

son packed up and despatched to Berne, with proper directions to wait there until the arrival of the Duchess of Castleton ; and promising that proper provision should be made for her reception ; but taking care, by Gertrude's desire, to express her directions so as to give no clue as to where she was to join Gertrude ; and with the extraordinary kindness and consideration that marked every movement of her life, when the time approached, the duchess despatched one of her own women to take her in charge until their arrival.

This also answered another purpose, as the duke was still in utter ignorance of his lady's *liaison* with Gertrude ; and as it was deemed advisable that he should continue so until she was safely settled in her new destination, it was necessary that she should accompany the duchess's party in some disguise. There was only one that seemed practicable, that of *femme de chambre*, and the duke was given to understand that she supplied the place of her whom

the duchess had despatched to wait for them at Berne.

“But do you not fear running into the lion’s mouth?” said the duchess to Gertrude, as the day of their departure approached; “do you never anticipate the possibility of being discovered and reclaimed by the count?”

“Not in the least,” she replied. “He will never appear to me again. If by any chance he is thrown in my way, which will indeed be a strange chance in the seclusion to which I shall confine myself, he will turn aside, and make as though he saw me not. He was not just ruffian enough to murder me, though I believe he has long thought me dearly purchased even with the luckless estate tacked to me; but now that he has got rid of me, and when even my dowry is a matter of doubt, he will never stand his trial in England for the chance of gaining one, with the certainty of the other.”

“And you do not think he has made away with himself in a fit of the remorse that often

seizes villains when they find that they have sinned to no purpose?"

"No, I am convinced he has not. There is a sort of determined elasticity, if I may use the expression, in his character, which not only bears him up against every misfortune, but makes every misfortune a trifle to him. He is a gambler in the widest meaning of the term ; he tries, speculates upon everything ; thinks no risk too great to run, having little to lose ; and when one ticket proves a blank, remembers there are prizes still in Fortune's wheel. I am satisfied he is this moment deep in some scheme of life in America, or some distant country, as if nothing agitating had ever occurred to him ; and all this without liveliness, or even the characteristic gaiety of his country. I never saw any one who gave me such an idea of heart having turned all into head, as he does."

"Yet his head has not hitherto done much for him."

“ Do you think it ever can, without a particle of heart ? don’t you think, to deal with human beings, we must have sympathies in common with them ? in short, don’t you think the fair laws of proportion are necessary to perfection in everything ? ”

“ Who made you so philosophical, my Gertrude ? ”

“ De l’Espoir. My beloved Herbert indeed endeavoured to teach me many wise maxims, but I was too happy then to let them reach my heart ; still they tingled in my ears, and when I went to Paris, I believe the grand attraction which De l’Espoir’s society had for me was, that he termed himself *philosophe*, which we used to call him whom I cannot now bear to name with him. My mind was too unformed to judge of the different schools to which they belonged ; and as of course they held many laws in common, I imagined they agreed in all things, and quaffed eagerly the draughts of knowledge that De l’Espoir present-

ed to me, alas ! alas ! I need not tell you with what fatal effect."

" My dearest Gertrude, you are not the least like yourself this evening ; you are bursting upon me quite in a new light. Where is my childish, innocent, untutored little *protégée* ?"

" Here ! here !" exclaimed Gertrude, throwing herself into the duchess's arms, " I am lost unless you think me so still, dearest duchess ; it is nearly as bad, worse indeed for oneself, to be all heart as all head : that am I ; and it is only at moments when I feel less miserable than at other times, that I am able even to recall a single idea beyond the pale of my affections and my sorrows ; that I am able even to think or reason on the cause of them, or do anything but weep."

" But you must have thought often and deeply on De l'Espoir's character, to be able to express yourself as you did just now concerning it."

“ No, indeed, I assure you I have not ; but have you never felt that you go on constantly receiving impressions, picking up knowledge, as it were, quite unknown to yourself, and of which perhaps you never become aware until some chance elicits it ? I don't know that I ever *thought* thus of De l'Espoir before, but I am sure I often felt it, or rather was the unconscious object which received the impressions, that, like those of invisible ink, may come out if subjected to the necessary process, or may remain concealed to all eternity.”

“ But, Gertrude, with your mind, you should not sink utterly under misfortune as you have done.”

“ My dearest duchess,” (twining her arms round her,) “ do you not perceive that, in saying so, you are giving me credit for more mind than I possess ? Saying people should make an effort to overcome a misfortune, is in fact saying they ought to have a power which they have

not: if the observation be made to themselves, it may sometimes be of use, because it, as it were, imparts to them that power, by making them aware of its existence; but otherwise, it is in my mind nonsense; for every effort the mind makes is a self-acting power, or else must be impelled by some invisible agent over which we have no control in the first impulse."

"But," said the duchess, smiling, "now that I have suggested to you to make the effort, do you not acknowledge that you ought to do so?"

"I know at least that I shall try. Strange, oh God! how strange to say, I feel the edge of my despair is becoming sometimes less intensely piercing. I can now sometimes think of hereafter with something like calmness and patience; the nightmare of that man's presence is removed from my mind, and it dares as it were to look about it once again."

"Gertrude, my beloved friend, for indeed

I may call you so, you will be very happy yet."

Gertrude smiled, and turned her beautiful eyes to heaven, with a look of calm conviction of the wildness of the suggestion.

"And why not?" asked the duchess tenderly, answering to that look.

Gertrude turned her eyes on her for a moment.

"Simply because — *I killed my brother;*" and, turning deadly pale, she leaned her head upon the duchess's shoulder, and in a few moments found relief in tears.

"There is one vow you must make to me," said Gertrude, after a long fit of musing; "duchess, you must vow to me that no circumstance will ever induce you to reveal to Godfrey the place of my retreat, or even the country in which it is to be. You know I have declined the request of his mother to correspond with me, which she sent through you."

“ You did indeed, and I thought you most fastidious in doing so.”

“ My dearest duchess, in this one point I must act according to my own sense of right, even against yours, my beloved, inestimable friend. I wish I could think I might be guided by yours: but oh! duchess, mine is no common love; I know not whether it was the original nature of my character, or whether it was my frightful fate which fixed the impressions indelibly on my heart, but I feel, I feel, oh! duchess, that I could not, dare not, ought not to hear of Godfrey, or to know that he is watching over me. My aim is to detach my heart from the world; it would be the same were I indeed the widow this dress bespeaks me. I might then indulge in loving Vandeleur, but his wife I would never be with so deadly a weight upon my heart; but now, to cherish my love to him, to feed it at least by food from without, were as impolitic as I feel it would be sinful.”

“And you really and absolutely have, at your age and with your attractions, bidden adieu to life and all its hopes?”

“I really and truly have: my heart is not formed for suspense, I could not bear it; remorse still less: so, as you would see me innocent and at peace, promise me that Godfrey shall never learn more than that I am alive and well, comparatively happy; and never let his name be uttered or written to me, except in either of two events — his *death* or — *marriage*.” She pronounced the words distinctly; but at one image or the other, or perhaps both, she again became very pale.

Thus adjured, the duchess of course could not refuse to comply with her request. She gave the solemn promise required of her; and a few days after, having made the apologies she thought would be most acceptable to the empress, for Gertrude's sudden departure, which, however, she was woman enough to know was already

pardoned, she, with the duke and their suite, in which Gertrude was included, bade adieu to St. Petersburg, and set out on her route to Switzerland.

CHAPTER XXVII.

The mighty sorrow hath been borne,
And she is thoroughly forlorn.
Her soul doth in itself stand fast,
Sustained by memory of the past
And strength of reason ; held above
The infirmities of mortal love ;
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
And awfully impenetrable.

WORDSWORTH.

SHIFT we the scene !

Fourteen years have now gone by since the opening of our story ; the young have advanced to middle age, the middle-aged have become old, and the old have gone down to their final resting-places ; the joyous and the laughing have become sad and sober, and some, that were sad then, are become happy now.

But while these, and even greater changes, have been taking place amongst the sons of men, the inanimate scenes of nature have remained unmoved. The rock juts as boldly from its deep abiding-place, and the ocean plays its freaks as wildly round it: all that depends on man is subject to his infirmity, and may rise or fall according to his whim. But there is comparatively little over which he has control; the planets roll above his head, the waters roar beneath his feet; to the one he cannot say, "be still," nor to the other, "be ye silent!" Yet much is granted to him; spots of paradise are scattered here and there for his use, and in these he may amuse his baby-mind; the world which he cannot regulate, he may mimic, and within some small enclosure bid it live in miniature for him.

Amidst the countries of the eastern hemisphere, I know of none better calculated for this great-little object than some parts of Switzerland. There the spectacle of creation attains so

much of soul-expanding majesty, assumes so many graces enchanting the imagination; there so intimate is the blending of the terrible and the lovely, that the poet might be tempted to fable that the wildness of Switzerland had wedded with the softness of its neighbour Italy, and that the magnificently varied scenes were the offspring of the union,

“ Where every day

Soft as it rolls along, shows some new charm,
The father's lustre, and the mother's bloom !”

For many a paradise of bright verdure and blushing flowers lies fondly nestled among those stern granite cliffs; soft pastoral valleys, with their deep cool moss and enamelled turf, wind through the gloomy solitudes of the howling forest; the chaunt of summer birds from many a scented nook thrills blithely above the deadened roar of distant cataracts; and the sunlight dallies with the sparkling gush of tiny rills below: while, far above, the giant Alps rear their icy pinnacles, height over height, against the unclouded æther; and, in the vast-

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ness of the contemplation, the gazer's breath grows laboured, and a shuddering silence falls on the parted lips, until awe and rapture soar above the bounds of conscious frailty, and break out in glorious song :

“ Ye ice-falls ! Ye that from the mountains brow
Adown enormous ravines slope amain !
Torrents methinks that heard a mighty voice,
And stopped at once amid their maddest plunge !—
Motionless torrents ! silent cataracts !—
Who made you glorious as the gates of heaven
Beneath the keen full moon ? Who bade the sun
Clothe you with rainbows ? Who with living flowers
Of loveliest blue spread garlands at your feet ?
God ! Let the torrents like a shout of nations
Answer, and let the ice-plains echo, God !
God ! Sing ye meadow-streams with gladsome voice.
Ye pine-groves with your soft and soul-like sound !
And they too have a voice, yon piles of snow,
And in their perilous fall shall thunder, God !”

It was on the verge of that savage and impenetrable tract which towers southwards of the lake of T—n, — a region where hills are piled on hills like the ruins of a former world, — but in one of the loveliest of those pastoral valleys that descend among the mountain gorges, one the

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most hitherto unknown and unfrequented, that the scene passed which was the subject of the third picture in the gallery to which I alluded, and which I endeavoured to describe, in the opening chapter of this narrative.

There was a beautiful cottage—it preserved the picturesque character of the country in which it rose—but with that was blended the comfort and even the elegance of England: beneath its porch sat a lady and gentleman, exactly as I have already described them in the painting, except that, all vivid as that painting was, it could not do justice to the lights and shades that passed over each countenance as they conversed together, not calmly, and yet not passionately.

“No—no—no—my friend,” said the lady, “it is all over; there have been moments indeed, ay, days, months, years, when, borne up on the wings of my young ardent spirits, I have felt persuaded that there was some peculiar happiness in store for me; I have looked out

upon the summer landscape, and have felt that happiness could not be that illusory thing that men have deemed it. I have seen it before me, and only waited to burst through some slight trammel of time or space to seize it. I have pursued it with as much faith and hope as ever did the alchemists their search after their golden dream, but, like that, it flitted *still* before me ; and if indeed there was anything of presentiment in these self-gratulatory feelings, it has only been that I should attain very, very near to the blissful phantom, and sometimes be happy in the very anticipation of happiness ; but no more : and yet so strong have been my natural aspirings after it, that even since the curse of Cain fell upon me, I have had my dreams ; *his* spirit was to be guardian angel to mine, for *they* never sinned against each other ; and the one chastening remembrance was to purify and temper down my happiness here to the pitch that is permitted to man ; still it *was* to be happiness, but it is years now since I have

had these dreams. I will not say I am grown wiser or better; but my fancy has grown tired of them, my patience is worn out, or has changed its nature. I abandon them for ever. The Almighty will allow me to turn even in my disappointment all to him, and herein I think it is that his divine superiority comes most touchingly home to us. Man, in his cruel pride and enduring resentment, turns from the broken heart that turned perhaps from him in *its* hour of prosperity; but God, God only accepts the sacrifice of the afflicted spirit, turn to him when it will. How beautifully, by the bye," she said, sinking a little from her tone of melancholy enthusiasm, "how very beautifully Moore expresses that idea in the exquisite little hymn, 'Oh Thou who driest the mourner's tear,' do you remember it?

' Oh Thou who driest the mourner's tear !
How sad this world would be,
If, when oppress'd and wounded here,
We could not fly to Thee !'

not that I believe he meant all that I mean—

for I mean the excelling goodness and mercy of God, not only in comforting us when the world afflicts us, but in allowing us to think that we even please him by offering to him the shattered remains of the heart that we have first offered round the world, and that has been rejected by it. Moore's idea is freer from the leaven of human frailty than mine is. He speaks of wounds and afflictions coming upon us from others, I speak of those we bring upon ourselves; still, still there is *God* to 'dry the mourner's tear.' How consoling, tender, and beautiful are the expressions in that little hymn, and in some others he has written! and yet I have heard his fellow-creatures, his fellow-sinners, and those too who set up as excelling in goodness, so utterly forget the precepts of charity and good-will preached by their divine Master, him at least whom they *call* Lord and Master, as to exclaim in pious horror at 'Moore's presuming to write religious verses!' But this narrow-minded daring, this presump-

tuous judging of their neighbour, in spite of the awful doom denounced against that hateful sin which involves so many others within itself, is a subject upon which I cannot trust myself to speak, scarcely to think, lest I too fall into the same error.—But I perceive I am wearying you ; you take no interest in what I am saying : perhaps this is a subject not even worth ridicule in the world now ; but you must remember that I have not stirred out of this retirement for twelve long years, and then wonder not at any antediluvian ideas you may detect in me.”

“ That you have exiled yourself for twelve long years, I remember but too well ; but is it possible that you have continued in this same spot so long, while I have been a wanderer over the face of the earth ? and, above all things, tell me what can have prompted you to this enduring cruelty to your friends ? Why did you not return to your country when you learned, that, not only the prosecution was withdrawn,

but the story of your misfortunes gone abroad like the history of a martyr?"

The lady looked down for a moment, to conceal a slight blush ere she replied. "Alas! how little it would appear, even you can read my heart! That my name is cleared from all odium, or obloquy, is rather grateful to me than otherwise; that it should have been necessary, lowers my estimate of human nature; but that any one, and especially you, my friend, could suppose that thereby my objection to appearing again in the world was done away, does indeed astonish me. Did the public opinion render me more or less guilty? or, did the danger of our losing my estate render me less safe from the return of ——; but of that I will not speak. Let it convince you how dead I am to such concerns, when I tell you that I never even suffered the Duchess of Castleton, that inestimable friend, who is my only channel of communication with the world, to write me the particulars of the prosecution being with-

drawn. I receive one letter from her every six months ; and that one is, at my request, confined to informing me of the welfare of herself and her family. I have been, you see, very determined in keeping my mind turned completely from the world."

" It is most strange !" exclaimed the gentleman, apparently thinking aloud ; " you are a strange and powerful character !"

" By no means ; rather the contrary ; unless you conceive strength of character to consist in wishing to do right, and keeping as many difficulties as I can out of my way : but let us not talk of that either ; rather tell me now, since I am for this evening a human being again, what *did* induce my cruel kinsman to withdraw his prosecution ?"

" Your kinsman is not by any means the fiend that we all, who knew you, believed him to be ; he is rather that mixture of good and evil that is, I fear, the commonest character. He no sooner ascertained that you were not

only innocent in thought, word, and deed, but had already suffered what might be considered sufficient punishment for the deadliest crimes, than he withdrew his claim at once, and was the loudest in execrations against your destroyer. The means of his being led to this conviction were indeed curious. Do you remember the surgeon who attended me in St. Petersburg?"

"Surely. M. Dumoulin; a kind and good-natured man; it were strange if I forgot him."

"Well, I do not know whether you are aware that the count had bound himself to pay a handsome sum of money to the uncle of this man, whenever he should obtain your fortune, and of course this young man was to share it; for this purpose chiefly, Dumoulin continued as a sort of spy upon De l'Espoir's movements, as they had no great trust in his honesty: but when their hopes seemed upon the very verge of accomplishment, De l'Espoir and you suddenly slipped through his fingers, he never hearing of

the cause the count had for flight. He waited for some time in hopes of hearing from him ; but, when he gave this up, he wrote to his uncle in London, to inform him that the bird had escaped them after all, just as the golden egg might be expected. The old German became infuriated ; he forgot everything but his revenge ; and supposing that De l'Espoir was privately but regularly receiving your income, without thinking of *his* reward, he came to me and to Lord Foxhill, as your father's executors, and laid the whole matter before us. You will believe that I lost no time in communicating it to the heir-at-law, and the suit was of course abandoned. My trust and aim in this was, that you would return to England ; and that if that wretched man, tempted by the accession of your wealth, ever ventured to return, that I would make the greater part of it over to him upon condition of his never troubling you in."

' The duchess hinted at this compromise

to me ; but, besides that I knew not where he was, I should, as I said before, never think of returning to England under such circumstances."

" But why ? why ? what have you found in this valley so attractive as to supersede all earlier feelings ?"

" Peace !" said the lady emphatically ; " peace ! which I should never have found in scenes where I once looked for more and lost all."

" And have you lived here without a friend except poor old Miss Wilson, who seems now to have lost the only mode of communication she ever had, that of nodding, now that it has become confirmed into an unceasing habit."

" No ; she has not been my only friend. I have been most fortunate under my peculiar circumstances. On our first leaving Russia, the dear Duchess of Castleton never for one moment forgot my comfort ; and you would have supposed by the inquiries she found means of

instituting in every place we came to, that to settle me respectably was the sole object of her our. It was throughout most fortunate for me that the duke was of that passive, *far-niente* character, which induced him never to trouble himself about any of his lady's plans or projects for the benefit of others, though he never refused her his assistance when she required it. After being almost reduced to despair, at the end of —, where the duke took a fancy to remain a week, we at length by dint of persevering inquiries, such as must certainly, adroitly as they were conducted, have excited the curiosity of some of whom they were made, heard of two English ladies who resided in a cottage in a very secluded valley about twelve miles from the town, near to the Convent of Santa Catarina,—in —, in *this* valley. The duchess made a visit to them, and learned their story; they proved two old Irish ladies, who, with their father, were implicated at the time of the rebellion of 98, he deeply implicated. They were Roman Ca-

tholics ; and an elder sister became a nun, and, having some property of her own, founded a convent here. Their father died soon after their arrival, and they remained ever since buried in the seclusion they had chosen : but, notwithstanding that seclusion, they still remembered enough of other days to know that the dukedom of Castleton was one of the proudest amongst English titles ; and the grace, beauty, and fascination, which you must admit shine conspicuously about our dear duchess, took their imaginations captive in an instant. She made known the object of her visit. She informed them that an unfortunate young creature, whom her partiality sketched as interesting, had been by the most perfidious arts betrayed into a wretched marriage, from which, as it could not be dissolved, she had no resource but in concealment ; and that her friends were anxious to procure for her the countenance of some respectable residents in the country which she preferred. The amiable old ladies listened with

pity and interest. The duchess besought them to visit her at her hotel, and judge for themselves of the object: this they declined; but, completely won by the duchess herself, they promised to be to me all that she had asked, which then only amounted to being amiable neighbours; but far, far indeed have they since surpassed that promise! Miss Wilson was written for to Berne; she joined us at the hotel; and, within an hour after, the duchess, she, and I were on our way hither. An apartment had been taken for Miss Wilson and me in the cottager's dwelling, until I should select a spot on which to build one for myself; but the amiable and kind-hearted Irish women, pre-pressed by the duchess in my favour, never let me to occupy it for one single hour. I was absolutely compelled to take up my abode in the hotel until this cottage was finished, and I have remained, as the story-book says, from that hour to this!"

“ Good God ! without ever seeing another human being ? ”

“ Not exactly ; I have made occasional visits with them to the convent of which their sister is abbess, and have been so charmed with all I saw there, that—will you believe it ?—I have sometimes thought of becoming a nun myself, and taking up my abode with them for ever ! ”

“ I could believe any cruelty, after what you have been capable of, in hiding yourself so pertinaciously for so long ; but luckily this is not in your power, they could not receive the vows of a married woman.”

“ God could receive them, and the lady, having founded the convent herself, has the power of dispensing with some rules ; besides which, they are so much attached to me, and so anxious to make a convert of me, that they would waive a great deal in my case. But come,” she said, smiling, “ these are vague fancies, and have only flitted rarely across my mind.”

“ I should hope so indeed, or you are more

terly lost to me than I have yet dared to believe. Gertrude," he said, in a tone of such deep feeling that his features seemed almost convulsed, "you can never know what I felt when I heard of the sudden determination of the Duke of Castleton to return to England, and I thought of you being left alone in that remote and distant country; for I feared, from the time the duchess had told me, that you would not soon return to England. I was just preparing to set out once more for St. Petersburg when the duchess's letter arrived, desiring that Wilson should be sent to Berne, and requesting in your name that I should make no further inquiries until the return of the duchess to England: tortured as I was, I felt obliged to comply; but when the duchess did arrive, and I found that I was never to learn more than that you still lived——But I will pass over my feelings on this point; some recollections there were that led me to despair, but they did not always prevail. I hung on for a long time in this

dreadful situation, still hoping that either you or your friend would relent, and at least let me learn how you passed your time : but one final interview with the duchess, in which I was more unfortunate than usual, destroyed this lingering hope ; she told me the secret was not hers to impart, that her honour was pledged to you, and I left her in despair. Soon after this, which I dare say was two years after I had been in Russia, my poor mother, broken down I think a good deal by sympathy in my misfortunes, fell sick, and, after lingering for a few months, paid the penalty of our fallen nature. I was then left without even an interest in life, or a tie to engage any affections ; I could not endure the dreadful vacuum in my heart and mind—I wished for employment ; but though I knew I could by the Duke of Castleton's interest procure one with very little trouble, my mind was still in that enfeebled, apathetic state, that I turned with loathing from everything that called for cold and formal attention to sti-

pulated duties, and from the mockery of receiving emolument where I had already more than my languid desires suggested the expenditure of. In this state of feeling I thought of endeavouring to lessen the miseries of my fellow-creatures, not so much as a religious duty, as an exercise likely to keep the feelings from the utter stagnation, or rather of only preying on ourselves : to render my views on this subject more efficacious, I determined upon entering the holy orders."

Holy orders ! do you mean to say that you are a clergyman ?"

No : when I first mentioned the subject, the Duke of Castleton kindly pressed me to accept of it ; but besides that, as I said before, I had more income already than I wanted for my support, I neither liked to be bound to one master nor fettered in what I may call my *whims* and *evolutions* ; and, to say truth, I did not care to be paid, as a religious professor, for what I had derived from such decidedly selfish motives."

“ In short, then, you are become a sort of lay missionary ! wandering over the world to make converts—to the Church of England of course ? ”

“ I have indeed been wandering over the world ; yet I neither call myself a missionary, nor do I ever seek to make converts except from vice. I have never yet endeavoured to subvert one principle *professed* to be taught by any church ; for I do not believe that it is by such principles, or doctrines as I should rather call them, obscure and above the comprehension of the wisest of us, that the poor and the ignorant will be judged. I believe it will be by the use they make of the instincts implanted in them by the finger of God himself, namely, ‘ faith, hope, and charity,’ and confirmed by divine revelation.”

“ Well, but *faith, what* faith ? ”

“ Faith in their Creator—hope in their Redeemer—charity to all men. With these, truly and deeply engraven on their hearts, and made manifest by their works, I care as little in what

form their little acts of devotion, as they are called, may be offered, as I should care if some friends, wishing to evince their respect for me, should one select one way, and another another for doing so. No: I have even prevented conversions, as you call them, when I have thought them merely the effect of momentary enthusiasm, or, what is still more frequently the case, disguised vanity and spiritual pride."

"You are indeed as I ever ——" The lady stopped abruptly, and a slight shade of colour passed over her pale but still lovely face.

"I am what, Gertrude? I am truly blessed this moment in having found you after all my wanderings, which, though I never dared to tell myself distinctly that such was my object, yet I am convinced were still influenced by it. Not a week since, I came to the village of——; that there is much immorality in these private regions, but I was requested to visit it for a short time, as I need not tell you, I suppose, there is no resident clergyman for many

miles round it. In my hours of leisure I of course explored the beautiful scenery about ; and when I tell you that neither in these, nor any other hours, or even moments of leisure, you have ever been absent from my thoughts for the last fourteen years, you may judge of my feelings when I met you wandering in that exquisite valley this evening."

The lady's countenance underwent a peculiar change. The melancholy, which had passed away from it for a moment, returned with a still deeper shade, but now blended with an expression of soul-touching tenderness as she answered, " I can indeed, my dear friend, imagine by my own that they must have been most affectionate ; but I trust, I trust, not inconsistent with our unchanged, *unchangeable* position with respect to each other."

" In Heaven's name, Gertrude, what do you mean by *unchanged*, *unchangeable* ? and inconsistent with *what* ?"

" With my being the wife of De l'Espoir,

Vandeleur, which I think you almost forgot at the moment of our meeting. You are aware he still lives?"

"I gathered from the duchess that you suspected it some time ago."

"Suspected it! I knew it. When, won by the kindness and affection of my two old friends here, I confided my story to them, they, without any suggestion from me, made inquiries through their Parisian banker, if anything had been heard of him; through that channel we ascertained that he had gone to the Antilles, suppressing his name and title—now become an honourable distinction—had settled there as a planter, and was amassing immense wealth: through the same channel they hear regularly of his welfare."

Vandeleur, on receiving this information, remained for several minutes in a profound silence: at length he said, "Gertrude, do you mean to leave this cottage?"

Never, except for a still narrower dwelling-

place : where should I go to ? unless indeed," she added with a smile, " to the convent."

" Then here also will I end my days," the gentleman exclaimed in a tone of cool and calm decision.

" Here ! how or what do you mean ?"

" Why no, not exactly to take possession of your house; but I shall procure one for myself close by, and ' hand in hand' we may still ' go down the hill together ;' what though they be but clasped in friendship ?"

It was now Gertrude's turn to be silent for a few minutes ; but her ever expressive countenance plainly indicated that the pause was not one of indecision, but merely a wish to select the gentlest language in which to convey her determination.

" It is impossible, utterly impossible : Vandeleur, it must not be," she said at last. " In what respect are either of us so much changed as that I should now consent to what I so determinately fled from twelve years ago, when

most miserable, and, God knows, requiring all the consolation which friendship could afford?"

"Then you are not miserable now?"

"No, thank Heaven! that word would be much too strong for my present state of mind: the one black spot is in my heart, which would alone, were every other objection removed, prevent my presuming to seek the enjoyments of life, from which I cut *him* off; but still the natural buoyancy of my temper, my unbroken health, and the cultivation of my tastes under the inspiring influence of this charming scenery and climate, together with the surest remedy of all—the lapse of time—have left me at this moment far from miserable. Could you believe, Frey, that I have become so calm under my affliction,—so familiar, as it were, with my bereft spirit now,—that, having cultivated a native taste for painting, under the direction of the sisters of the convent, I have made use of the first evening in which my brother and I spoke in confidence of you?"

It appears to me and to Miss Wilson a striking likeness ; come in and see it."

Vandeleur followed her into the interior of the cottage, where, in her only sitting-room, he observed a large picture shaded by a muslin drapery ; some feeling, which the fair artist, or else the mourning sister, had not yet overcome, having induced her to conceal it from the glare of day, or the casual observation of even her very limited circle of acquaintances. She now advanced to it, and, drawing aside the curtain, displayed to Vandeleur the first of the three pictures which so powerfully attracted my attention in the gallery of ——.

Vandeleur stood for a moment confounded by the extraordinary likeness of the boy ; then, as the recollections of that blissful evening crowded upon his mind, he burst into tears and rushed out of the room. Gertrude let fall the curtain over the picture once more ; and delaying a few minutes, as well to suffer him to recover, as to banish all traces of the emotion

which she herself experienced, she rejoined him in the porch.

"I need not ask if you think the likeness a good one?" she said softly, still anxious to have it confirmed by his lips.

"It is life itself," he replied; "have you done any others?"

"Of him? No. Though I had resolution enough to plan and even to execute that design, would not undertake another: I was nearly three years completing it; my tears almost traced every feature just in proportion as it grew like: but I am now engaged in doing one representing my first interview with the Duchess of Castleton, which was another critical period of my life; but it is not yet advanced enough for you to see it."

And in these pursuits you have found the tranquillity which I am as far as ever from obtaining; and yet you refuse to let me partake Gertrude?"

And where would it be then? How long,

think you, it would last when self-condemnation began to mingle with it? No, no, Vandeleur; I would, God knows, give up my own tranquillity to ensure yours, but not by means which would deprive us both of it: a great part of mine is based upon the belief that Herbert's spirit is still hovering over me,—for *he* knows I never sinned against him,—and that he approves of the self-denial I have practised ever since."

Vandeleur gazed upon her with an expression in which, if something of earthly passion still lingered, it was tempered, if not neutralised, by her holy enthusiasm. It passed away however, when she ceased speaking; and with a return of anxious pleading he asked, "But, Gertrude, is this self-denial that you speak of, merely to avoid the misconception of a world that has long lost sight of us both, and would never come to seek us here?"

"And if it be," she said, evading the question, and turning aside to conceal a conscious blush, "if even that be essential to my peace, you

would not urge the contrary? No, Vandeleur, I know you would rather contribute to my happiness; and the only means in your power to do so is, to promise me that you will be happy yourself."

"Away from you? never!" he exclaimed with vehemence, starting from a reverie into which he had fallen. "I have imposed duties upon myself, and I fulfil them; but it is only by taking an opiate to drown recollection for a me, that it may return at intervals with redoubled anguish."

"Vandeleur, you terrify me," said Gertrude, her countenance indeed confirming what she feared. "Is this what you call religion?"

"Pardon me, you cannot have attended to what I said. I neither tried to deceive you myself—and the Almighty I could not deceive—as to the motives which induced me to take up this profession, if I may call it so. There were but two courses left for me to avoid a state of apathy which I could not en-

dure ; a course of blind and heartless dissipation, or that I have chosen. Your image, and, I will hope, something more, withheld me from the former ; and I adopted the latter as being at once innocent and not foreign to my natural disposition, which the acquisition of money without an object would have been. If I have been of some use ; if I have bound up some bruised and broken spirits, or led one human being aside from vice ; I am grateful for the temporary gratification it afforded me : but I found no merit upon it, no claim to be called a religious character. But, even as a remedy against misery, how far short has it fallen of success ! my thoughts have been sometimes filled, my feelings interested, but my affections never ! Yet let me not shock you, my dear Gertrude. I had been more or less than man could I have forgotten my interest in you ; and, *less* I think it must have been, whilst I believed you in a miserable exile. Since I see you happy and beautiful as ever, I shall endeavour to bear

my own burden more lightly ;” but the look and manner that accompanied these words seemed to contradict their import.

“ Oh, Vandeleur, that you could cease to think it a burden !” said Gertrude in a soft and deprecating tone. “ Now that you see me comparatively happy, oh that you would become so yourself ! and since your benevolent exercises do not, unhappily, satisfy you, why will you not seek it from some other source ?”

“ How do you mean, Gertrude ?”

“ If you would but marry, dearest Vandeleur.”

“ Marry ! marry ! are you quite mad, Gertrude ? Never, even for one single moment, the bare possibility of such an event crossed mind.”

It is exactly for that reason that I suggest you. You are still in what is often called prime of man’s life ; and since you paid me a compliment just now, I can with sincerity repeat it, and say you wear your years particu-

larly well. Many, many an amiable, ay and fair young girl, could you find to make you a happy husband and father."

"Yea, to sell herself, or be sold to me for an establishment."

"Not so, Vandeleur. They do women gross injustice who assert that they cannot sincerely love an amiable agreeable man, if he be not also young. An objection there is in the usual dissimilarity of tastes, when the disparity in years is great; but good sense and good temper on both sides—and I would not have you marry any one without them—will make molehills of what seem mountains to others."

"Yes, and this is what I am to be content with, instead of heaven's own happiness which I once expected,—perfect blending of being, soul, and mind, until two imperfect creatures, under the sweet control of each other's love, grow into one perfect one, each for the other's sake, and so at last return to their Creator, never more to be divided; and such I am con-

vinced is the happiness which marriage was intended to confer."

"When Eve was created for Adam, perhaps it was, and may sometimes even happen still; but, oh! so rarely, that which of Adam's fallen sons will presume to say such should be his lot?"

"And yet, oh God! it might have been *mine!*" Vandeleur exclaimed in deep emotion; but it was the emotion of him who looks for one despairing moment over the side of some vessel in a storm, to catch a last glimpse of the treasure that has been swept overboard, and which the waves are about to ingulph forever from his view. A shade passed over the lady's brow.

"No more of that! it is unbecoming, it is *unbecoming*," she said.

"It is *not* sinful, so help me Heaven! Unbecoming, or at least most fruitless, it may *be*; but sinful my feelings are not, and never were upon that subject. If they had

been, I should not feel so much pain in relinquishing them. There is always something in doing right, that consoles one for the sacrifice it may require. I mean not this theologically. I mean that the mind which has strength enough for the effort, will always feel a certain degree of pleasure in the exercise of it; but here, to give up all hopes——”

“Hopes!” repeated the lady with a look of sad reproof. “Hopes! and on what can such hopes be founded? Oh, think upon the last commandment; think upon Him who in his wisdom said the *wish* was the *crime*.”

“It is in vain, Gertrude,” said Vandeleur utterly unmoved, “in vain that you would seek to alarm me upon this subject. I never broke that commandment. I never coveted the wife of another. I would not, God knows,——even if I could, I would not——take her to my bosom as such, even now after the long years of hopeless misery I have endured; but how is the commandment broken in seeking the

pure friendship which now alone can—or even in the humble hope that the time may yet come when——”

“Vandeleur, no more!” said the lady, interrupting him; “for *your* feelings I cannot exactly answer; from my own I know, I *know*, that the indulgence of such hope is highly dangerous, if not in itself sinful; and will *they* not be doubly guilty who knowingly incur the danger of that guilt? But I have yet another argument in store. I said twelve years ago, and repeat it now with a determination as fixed, that were I even free to marry, with my brother’s blood upon my head, I never would come the wife of any man!”

“This is fanaticism, madness, Gertrude; but alas! there is no occasion to dispute it yet. I hope that if the blessed time should ever come——”

“Vandeleur, I will not hear you talk thus; more, I will not have you think thus. Did I not even believe it sinful, I would not have,

you waste your life in pursuit of a phantom. There is yet a way to end it,—a deep and solemn vow,” and she raised her hands and eyes to heaven, “that no time, *no time*, no circumstances, shall ever induce——”

Vandeleur seized her arm convulsively. “Speak it not ! think it not !” he gasped forth. “Gertrude, we have already suffered enough from an oath of yours, deferring our marriage. If I must abandon all I have hitherto dragged on existence for, let it be by means which *I* also shall recognise as binding. What power could the oath of another have over my conscience ?”

Gertrude feared to irritate him by farther opposition, but by her own feelings she knew what a change the utter impossibility of their ever being united would necessarily produce in his ; and at that very moment a thought, a plan, a determination, was formed in her mind. She had lost none of her early enthusiasm, and she believed the thought to be almost inspira-

tion. She gave it no utterance, but averted her head to conceal the tears that forced themselves on her eyes at sight of his emotion. He did not appear to notice her or them, but leaned back in moody silence. Gertrude wished to interrupt the train of his reflections.

"Vandeleur!" she said, and laid her hand on his arm as if to soften the seeming cruelty of what she was about to say—"Vandeleur, it is almost time that we should part, evening is closing fast around us."

He attempted to lay his hand on hers, but she hastily withdrew it with matronly dignity; and it was this moment that was so happily caught in the third picture of the series—and his eyes did indeed beam with the reproving yet loving affection of a being of another sphere who is not yet perfected.

He feared he had misconstrued her forbearance as an intended vow at his request; she was anxious to undeceive him: "Yes, we must part, Vandeleur," she said, "and——" She

hesitated to complete her sentence ; he took it up.

“ And how early may I come to-morrow ? ”

Still she hesitated, rapidly changed colour, and cast her eyes upon the ground ; he could not imagine what occasioned her emotion, and gazed upon her in astonishment. She clasped her hands together, and in the gentlest and most supplicating manner, a manner that was peculiarly her own, she said,

“ Vandeleur, dear, dear Vandeleur ; do not be angry with me, but we must—indeed we must—*meet no more !* ”

Vandeleur sprang from his seat as if a ball had been shot through him. It was evident that, notwithstanding all Gertrude had been preaching with so much sincerity, some vague hope, some delusion, some—in short, “ anything but leaving her ”—had still kept possession of his feelings, if not of his reason.

“ No more ! meet no more ! ” he exclaimed as soon as he could articulate. “ What ! after

twelve years of accursed separation and misery, do we part thus on the very first meeting? Gertrude," he said in an altered tone, and looking fixedly upon her, "Gertrude, you are either trifling with my feelings, or else your own for we are utterly, utterly changed and gone!"

"I should think the first involves the second," he said gently; "but, dear Vandeleur, think of me whatever will tend most to lessen your own regret."

"Regret for what?"

"For me, Godfrey; for indeed—indeed——must I then repeat it?"

"*For indeed we must part*, you would say? And for how long, pray? Are there to be no limits to your tyranny?"

"Vandeleur, until you can tell me that the remembrance of me does not stand between you and your being happy with some other object."

Then indeed farewell *for ever*, Madame de Noirmair! You said truly that we shall meet no more: you are doubly safe from my presence

henceforth ; first, as I have no power to fulfil your condition ; and secondly, as I find my interest in your regard is at an end." He rose as he spoke, and, bowing coldly, hastily went out from the porch.

Gertrude stepped forward with the intention of stopping him ; but he either did not perceive, or did not attend to her. Just as she was about to utter his name, in that tone which could not have been resisted, the thought occurred to her—"to what purpose?" and she suffered him to depart. She turned into her lonely abode, sought her own chamber, and, flinging herself upon her knees beside her couch, she buried her face in her hands, and remained in that posture for upwards of an hour. Let no one endeavour to pry into what passed between her and her God !

CHAPTER XXVIII.

“ Jours charmans, quand je songe à vos heureux instans,
Je pense remonter le fleuve de mes ans ;
Et mon cœur enchanté, sur sa rive fleurie
Respire encore l’air pur du matin de la vie.”

WHEN Gertrude rose next morning, it was evident even to her unobservant friend Miss Wilson that some change had been wrought upon her spirit ; the holy calm and quiet she had hitherto enjoyed seemed to have passed away, and a strange and feverish anxiety to have taken possession of her. For herself, she felt that the equilibrium of her mind, which it had required so many years and so much schooling to establish, had been rudely disturbed, and she feared would not be easily restored : she told herself that she had done right in dismiss-

ing her devoted friend, her former lover ; but alas ! she felt that the sacrifice had upset her.

“ But I will atone for it ! I will atone for it ! ” she exclaimed ; “ he shall not thus linger out his precious life in vain hopes of what never, never can take place. Heigho ! I wish I had not seen him, I wish he had not drawn that picture of wedded love : but I will pray, earnestly pray, that he may yet enjoy it with another ; and why should he not. He is indeed no longer young, but he is still eminently handsome ; all the animation and warmth of his earlier years still characterise his delightful manners ; his fine eyes have indeed changed their expression, and are become pensive and melancholy ; but this very circumstance proves that their power of expressing his feelings is still unimpaired, and, if he were happy again, they would again be bright and joyous. I wonder if I am as little changed : I dare say I may be ; for it is the ‘ wear and tear ’ of the feelings and affections, that leave their traces on the

countenance : where these have been smothered and pent up, they are still fresh to shed their animation around one when called forth. But what am I thinking of? what does it signify how much or how little *I* may be changed? nor should I have permitted my mind to dwell so long on *his* appearance, were it not considering it for another. Yes, he has every reason to expect happiness if one fatal fascination were removed; and removed it shall be. In the purity and austerity of a convent my mind will soon again subside from the little agitation that has now assailed it; and when I have vowed my vows, after my own fashion, never under any circumstances to leave that holy place again, even though I may not conform to every ceremony or subscribe to every doctrine, I shall let Vandeleur know my irrevocable doom; and by degrees, when hope is utterly destroyed, he will think less and less of me, and I shall go down to my grave happy in the thought that he is happy!"

Having come to this resolution, Gertrude's mind became for the present more composed ; such generally is the effect of any powerful effort over one's self : but it is when that first glow of satisfaction has expended itself that the trial comes on ; and therefore it is, that every resolution formed in the excitement of our feelings, should afterwards be diligently examined by our reason before we proceed to put it into execution.

Gertrude had had too little experience in life, too few opportunities in her secluded valley of forming resolutions to be kept or broken, to be aware of the caution they require. She felt that there was something necessary to tear her heart and Vandeleur's asunder once more, after the spring they had again made towards each other by their unexpected meeting ; and she imagined that the most desperate means must be the most effectual. She felt no doubt of being admitted on her own terms into the convent of the Irish abbess, as well from that

lady's partiality towards her, as through the influence of the two lay sisters, who were still more intimately attached to her : and, to Gertrude's own feelings and principles, there was nothing so revolting in the Christian sect that had such amiable beings for its sincere votaries, as that she could not conform as far as civility should require when domesticated beneath their roof, whilst her own heart was the temple in which she at all times loved to worship.

In this frame of mind, she despatched a note to one of the two sisters who lived near her, informing her that she intended to visit her that morning on very particular business, and begging to know if she should be at leisure to receive her without interruption. While the messenger was away, Gertrude sat down to the breakfast-table, which had hitherto, in the excitement of her nerves, almost escaped her notice ; although Miss Wilson, in her unaltered habits of mechanical regularity, had eaten hers before her eyes with perfect unconcern.

Gertrude was destined not to partake of any that day.

“Do you expect Major Vandeleur this morning?” asked Miss Wilson as she turned her heavy eyes from the window opposite which she sat.

“No,” said Gertrude very emphatically; “he comes hither no more.”

“Because I think that’s very like him, galloping as hard as he can up towards the house.”

“Impossible!” said Gertrude, starting up and running out to the porch, literally with the intention of preventing him from alighting; but Vandeleur had already given the mule he rode to a man who was doing some little job of husbandry before the cottage, and, entering at once, encountered Gertrude on the very spot where they had parted the evening before.

She was amazed, and almost startled, at the extraordinary change in his appearance: instead of the gloomy melancholy and depression of the evening before, all was now with him joyous

animation ; and, as if utterly forgetful of all that had passed, he seized both her hands, and, kissing them warmly but respectfully, he interrupted all remonstrance by exclaiming,

“ No, no, Gertrude ; this is no moment for trifling forms. I speak not, I feel not, as your lover now ; I forget myself in the happiness I have the power of imparting to you. Read that letter, dearest ;” and he drew one from the breast-pocket of his coat, and handed it to her.

Gertrude, though scarcely able to support herself, from the agitation which his extraordinary manner had excited, received it from his hand, and glanced her eye over it ; but, no sooner had her mind taken in its purport, than, with a wild scream between joy and agony, she flung herself into Vandeleur’s arms, and fainted on his bosom.

Perhaps never since faints were first invented to try the nerves of the lookers-on, was one ever perpetrated that excited so little commiseration, as did that of Gertrude now in the breast

of Vandeleur. He held her from him for a moment, and absolutely smiled in the intensity of his own pleasurable feelings ! Not conceiving, however, that this was exactly a legitimate mode of gratifying them, he carried her into the interior of the cottage, and, placing her on the sofa, called to Miss Wilson for assistance ; but in a tone so light and joyous that even she, in running about for hartshorn and water, two or three times looked back to see if it was not a hoax got up for *her* ! She felt almost confirmed in her suspicion when, on her return, breathless with haste, (a most unusual state of body or mind for her,) she found Gertrude with a countenance beaming with such ecstasy and thankfulness, as she had never seen upon it since the day that Herbert was thrown from his horse ! The moment Miss Wilson entered, Gertrude arose ; and, though choking with the excess of her emotion, threw her arms round her neck,—an excess of feeling and familiarity which that quiescent person had never before expe-

rienced from any one,—and sobbed out, “ Oh ! my dear Miss Wilson ! thank God with me, and for me ! I am not, I am not the murderer of my brother ! ” Will it be believed that Miss Wilson burst into tears ! This was the more extraordinary, as it was never known *how* she had learned that poor Gertrude had ever accused herself of the deed, or even *that* she *had* learned it ; but it proved, perhaps more fully than anything else could have done, how powerful and evident had been the change wrought upon Gertrude by that dreadful conviction, when the sudden removal of it could thus affect one “ albeit unused to the melting mood.” “ Kneel down, Miss Wilson ! kneel down, my dearest Godfrey ! and return thanks with me ! ” Gertrude exclaimed : they obeyed her mechanically, but no one attempted to utter a word ; the overflowing heart feels them so unnecessary ! Gertrude’s joy was, however, too overwhelming to continue under restraint even in prayer. She rose from her knees again : “ Tell me, oh ! tell

me, Vandeleur," she said, still weeping as if the bitterest affliction had fallen upon her, except that the muscles of her mouth were twitching, vibrating as it were, in mockery of her own tears, "tell me where you found this blessed document of heaven, and why you did not tell me of it sooner?"

"Because I did not know of it, my dearest Gertrude: think you I could have concealed it for one single instant? Do you remember, Gertrude, the only commission you gave me from St. Petersburg?" Gertrude's feelings were too deeply engaged at present upon the one engrossing object of her life for any other to gain admittance, and she answered with the most perfect composure, "I do; it was to destroy your letters to me, which were in my little letter-box, and for this purpose I sent you the key of it."

"You did, but I never could endure to execute your commission; I felt as if doing so would destroy the only link that now existed between us. I disobeyed you in the hope—may

I acknowledge it?—that the time might come, when together we should rejoice over the breach of your command; and I always carried the little letter-box about with me, wherever I travelled, as the most precious part of my luggage. Last night, however, when I really believed, for the first time, that all was over between us, that there had arisen obstacles against me in your own breast, Gertrude,” (and his countenance saddened once more,) “ more hopelessly insurmountable, at least more destructive to my hopes, than any others that fate could oppose, except death itself, I determined, nay, I vowed in the bitterness of my anguish, to destroy those letters of other days, no longer of value in your eyes. I did not reach my home last night; but the moment I arrived there this morning I shut myself up in my chamber to perform my cruel task, little, indeed, foreseeing what it was to bring about! For this purpose I took from my neck, where it has hung for twelve years, the little key, and opened the box. The first letter

that met my view was one directed to your father, in a hand I knew, yet could not at the moment recollect. In my capacity of executor I opened it, and I leave it to your own heart to judge the sensations of mine when I read that letter ! I now recollect distinctly your poor father peevishly muttering that he had had a letter of condolence from Dr. C—, but, when I asked to see it, saying he had mislaid it. You may be sure I lost no time in coming to you with the news ; and now, my dearest Gertrude, will this blessed intelligence not make a change in your determinations ?”

“ Vandeleur !” she exclaimed, clasping her hands together, and looking up to heaven in an ecstasy of thankfulness, “ do not talk to me of my determinations, or of the future now ! For the first time, for nearly fourteen years, I feel once more what it is to be happy in the present ! Oh, God ! oh, God ! teach me to bear it as I ought !” She bowed her head again, and remained silent for an instant ; then resumed,

“ But you think, you really think, there is no doubt of this ? that there can be no mistake ? Oh, Vandeleur ! ” and with a sort of sobbing sigh, and beaming smile, she leaned her head for an instant against his shoulder: it was but for one instant, and seemed really to be the effect of the very exhaustion of happiness. “ Vandeleur,” she said, “ you, even you, can have no idea of what I feel this day. Good God ! I am almost startled to find how much of my grief for my beloved Herbert was owing to the idea of my own part in the tragedy: ~~but~~ no, I do myself wrong in saying so ; for nothing, as you know, could exceed my grief during his long illness, and how willingly I sacrificed my own, and even your happiness for him. No ; it only shows that every thing in nature is relative, and that all things are alike to God ! Could I ever have believed it would be positive happiness to me to hear of the impossibility of his ever recovering from the effects of that fatal fall ? and yet now my whole soul is subdued in thank-

fulness to hear it! Oh! how can any one ever doubt that there must be some unlimited Mind which sees all things past, present, and to come at a glance, and regulates them accordingly?"

Vandeleur suffered her to run on for some time longer in this strain, or any other in which the exuberance of her joy and gratitude seemed inclined to vent itself. When she appeared to grow a little calmer, he ventured once more to endeavour to lead her to think of the future. "But now, dearest Gertrude," he said, "now that this oppressive load is removed from your heart, will you not return to England—to your friends?"

She turned to him with one of the sparkling, speaking smiles of her early youth; it seemed to say, "*Might I?*" but alas! it scarcely lingered for a moment; a shade passed over her brow, and a blush over her cheek. "No, no; better not," she said; "I am still the wife of De l'Espoir, still the wife of one over whom a criminal prosecution may be impending, or, if

it be abandoned, who perhaps would not even yet leave me at peace ! No, no ; shall I, at the very moment when such an unlooked-for mercy has been vouchsafed to me,—shall I choose that moment to be less thoughtful of my duty, or less scrupulous in avoiding temptation ? Oh ! no,” she exclaimed, bursting again into tears ; “ and I feel mortified at finding how much of my self-denial proceeded from my incapacity for enjoyment, when I thought it all a principle of duty : but I will make the mortification a salutary one ; what I was willing to do from inclination, I will do from duty. Vandeleur, I will not leave *this valley ! there shall be no change in my determinations whatever they may have been !*”

Vandeleur was alarmed at the decisive and emphatic tone in which she pronounced these words ; but, fearing to let them take still deeper root in her mind, he exclaimed, “ For God’s sake, Gertrude, do not give way to this enthusiasm !”

“ My dear Vandeleur,” she replied, mildly, but firmly, “ that I am of an enthusiastic tem-

per I am well aware, and that enthusiasm must find vent in some way is as certain. I am by circumstances debarred from exercising it where it only adds zest and warmth to the pleasures of life, therefore do not seek to restrain me from turning it where, at least, it can do harm."

"Then let me remain near you, Gertrude, where I may see you even occasionally; in your fresh accession of happiness you should not be so churlish of it."

"I am not churlish of it, Vandeleur. Heaven, which alone can judge the heart, knows I would transfer it to you if I could; but," she continued, with a bright blush and downcast eyes, "it is not at the moment when I find how I had deceived myself as to the purity of my own motives, that I will yield to what my own wishes might suggest."

"But do not call it yielding to your own wishes, Gertrude; yield in pity, in charity, for the sake of mine."

"No, Vandeleur; for neither. I formed a resolution in my suffering, which I believe

to be right; I will not shrink from it in my joy!" There was a few minutes' silence.

"Gertrude," said Vandeleur at last, with a gloominess of voice and manner, "Gertrude, you have not the smallest regard for me remaining. I am worse than a fool to persecute you any longer."

Gertrude was considering how to reply to this speech, when the door opened; and instead of the answer to her note to the old lady, which she had expected, that lady herself made her appearance. Gertrude sprang forward to receive her; but, whether it was the joyous change in her own feelings and deportment, or whether there really was any foundation for it, she imagined that she perceived something more reserved and serious than usual in the lady's air and manner. Gertrude hastened to present Vandeleur, mentioned each to the other as her particular friend, and gave a hurried account of her accidental meeting with the latter.

Still it would not do. The old lady, though usually cheerful and chatty, sat silent and sub-

dued. At last Gertrude said, "It was very good of you to take the trouble of coming to me, instead of allowing me to go to you ; but I have some news for you which your kind heart will consider as amply repaying you."

"And I have news for you," the lady said with the same gravity, "which I thought it more proper to inform you of here, than to bring you to my house to learn."

Gertrude, who was actively concerned with her two old friends in many little schemes of benevolence and utility, concluded that the lady alluded to something relating to some of these ; but, surprised at the seriousness of her tone and manner, and perceiving that Vandeleur's presence seemed a restraint upon her, she asked if she should wish to speak to her in another room, and, with an apologetic smile and bow to Vandeleur, she retired with her. Before, however, Gertrude could suffer the lady to commence her communication, whatever it might be, in the tumult of her own joy she caught

her in her arms ; and again weeping, almost hysterically, from the mere effect of uttering such blissful words, informed her of her comparative innocence of her brother's death. The old lady heartily and affectionately congratulated her, and even warmly joined in her renewed thanksgiving.

“ And what will be the consequence of this news ? What will you do now,—go back into the busy world, and forget all the lessons of your adversity ? ”

“ No, my friend ; I trust I never could be guilty of such ingratitude, even were I called to the highest summit of earthly bliss that my own heart could covet ; but as I never have concealed anything from you, my respected friend, I will not conceal now that I should not wish to be subjected to the cruel trial of daily and hourly seeing pictures of domestic happiness before my eyes, which once seemed destined to be my own lot ; and to know that one ” (and she laid her blushing cheek against that of

her old friend) " whose soul is still centred in me, is withering under the same regrets. No ; I will fly from the temptation of useless repining, and I will put the temptation for ever out of *his* way. My friend, I am going to enter into your sister's convent !"

Had a thunderbolt burst at the old lady's feet, it could not have more astounded, though it might have more alarmed her, than this announcement at this particular moment. That Gertrude would in time become a Roman Catholic, where she scarcely ever saw any person of another persuasion ; and even that, in future years, they might all find the convent their final resting-place, might, and probably did, occasionally flit across the imaginations of the amiable sisters ; but that the sudden and irrevocable resolution should be adopted by Gertrude herself at this particular moment, when for the first time she betrayed the joyous, bounding animation and happiness of her earlier days and natural disposition ; and at the moment too, when, after a separation of twelve years, the

lover of her youth, and the still beloved friend of her chastened feelings, sat once more beside her, appeared an anomaly so strange, that the old lady was almost tempted to burst out laughing at it. There was more than all this too in the news she had herself to impart, to make it appear one of those critical moments, that have occurred at some periods of every one's existence ; when the fortunate have had ever after to congratulate themselves on a lucky escape, the unfortunate to mourn over some irrevocable step ; or, as Shakspeare more eloquently expresses it, it was that

Tide in the affairs of men,
Which taken at the flood leads on to fortune ;
Omitted, all the voyage of their life
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

The news which the old lady had to impart was, that Gertrude's wretched husband was no more ! It was not the regular time for her hearing from her banker ; but as he was on terms of more than professional acquaintance with her family, and as she had always ex-

pressed a great desire to be informed of anything that might transpire respecting De l'Espoir, the gentleman had the kindness, as soon as the news reached him through De l'Espoir's own man of business, to write to his fair correspondent to inform her of the event. All the necessary particulars were given. He had died at the Antilles of the yellow fever; leaving, as the newspapers asserted, a wife, (the daughter of a wealthy planter,) and two children, to deplore his loss.

When the old lady received this news, her first feeling was unmixed delight; and she was just setting out to inform Gertrude of it, when she received her note. As she walked along, she composed her features and deportment to the decent gravity becoming the announcement she was about to make; and there was something that struck her in finding Gertrude in such animated and evidently not melancholy emotion, seated beside her early lover, that deepened that gravity even more than she intended: but when she retired with that amiable being, and

was made acquainted, not only with the source of her joy, but the uprightness and purity of her principles and resolutions, there appeared to her something so exalted, so heavenly in it all, that she considered for a moment whether it would not be wrong in her to throw any stumbling-block in her way to such perfection, by informing her that the only one that stood between her and earthly happiness was removed. Besides, as *bonne Catholique*, she was not sure how far she should be justifiable in preventing a conversion; and such her sagacity told her would inevitably be the consequence of the communication she had to make. But as, notwithstanding all that is thought, or at least said, to the contrary, being *bonne Catholique* is not absolutely inconsistent with being a kind-hearted, upright, and feeling woman, the old lady asked herself if, after all, she had a right to take the matter of Gertrude's happiness here, or salvation hereafter, so completely into her own hands. "And her conversion must be so sudden too!" she said to herself, "for the

last time we spoke upon this subject, about a fortnight ago, she laughingly evaded all our unanswerable arguments, just as she ever did. I will sound her at all events upon this subject, and I hope act accordingly."

"But, Gertrude," she began, in pursuance of this prudent resolution, "your conversion, my dear, is little short of a blessed miracle; or were you only pretending to hold out so long?"

"No, indeed, my kind friend; I never pretended anything on the subject, nor will I deceive you now. The truth is, I am still a heretic in many points; but then I trust to your kind intercession, and that of——"

"Oh then, if that be the case, my dear," exclaimed the kind-hearted old lady, interrupting her before she should have time to make any further attack upon her conscience, which she now persuaded herself told her to refuse the admission of a heretic, "if that be the case, put it out of your head. It is not your vocation. God can show you his light in the synagogue of the Jews, as well as in the convent of Santa

Catarina ; and in his holy time I do not doubt but he will. In the mean time, my dear young friend, return to the world ; act your part there in prosperity as nobly as you have done here in adversity ; and never give your poor old friend cause to regret that she did not cheat you into becoming a nun, by concealing from you that it is in your power to become a wife !” and the old woman embraced her lovely young friend in a torrent of kindly tears.

Gertrude for a moment feared her brain had turned : “ What in the name of Heaven can you mean, my dearest madam ?” then, turning pale with sudden apprehension, she exclaimed, “ Is—is — Monsieur de l’Espoir come back to claim me ?”

“ No, my child ; the Count de l’Espoir is gone to that place from whence he never can return to trouble you more. Gertrude, you have been a widow for more than four months !”

Gertrude stood transfixed for one moment, the picture of horror and amazement : yes, notwithstanding all that she had suffered, and all

that she had expected still to suffer, the first sensations produced by this awful announcement were horror and amazement.

"Take courage, my dearest child," said the kind old lady, taking her cold hand; "I see the finger of God in all this: these are happy, happy days in store for you yet."

The conflict was awakened in Gertrude's breast; the rush back upon her heart of the full tide of early feelings, early hopes and wishes, contending with all that, since, had so firmly and conscientiously had possession of it, together with the agitation she had already undergone for the last two days, was too much for her strength; her kind old friend assisted her to gain her couch, to which she was confined in a sharp fit of illness for nearly three weeks.

At the end of that time she was able to receive a visit from Vandeleur: he had of course been made acquainted with the sudden change in her circumstances and prospects; and although his first feeling, it must be acknowledged, was rapturous joy, with loverlike ap-

prehensions, he soon began to torment himself on the subject of Gertrude's late coldness ; and, by the time that she was sufficiently recovered to receive a visit from him, he had worked himself into a state bordering upon despair.

In this frame of mind he stood in the little sitting-room of the cottage, anxiously but tremulously expecting her appearance ; and such was the excess of his agitation upon hearing her light step advancing from the inner chamber, that he was obliged to turn hastily to the window to conceal it. When he heard the door open, he still remained standing with his back towards it. Gertrude was astonished, for she knew that he must have heard her enter. She shut the door, and, advancing a few steps, stood still in the middle of the room ; still he did not move or seem as if he heard her. At last she softly pronounced his name, and, as if from compulsion, he slowly turned at the call ; but betrayed a countenance so full of anxiety and emotion, that Gertrude was no longer at a loss to ac-

count for his wishing to conceal it; and there was mingled with its expression a sort of manly mortification that seemed to say, "You see what I am reduced to, but I cannot help it!"

Gertrude felt tenderly affected: she could not for a moment hesitate between mere conventional forms, and the keeping such a heart in unnecessary suspense; "that, indeed," she said to herself, "would be making no distinction between the reality and the shadow." She advanced at once, though with an air of conscious timidity, and held out her hand to him. He gazed one anxious moment in her face before he accepted it: apparently he was satisfied with what he saw there; for with a sort of smothered groan of rapture—if one has ever heard such a thing,—he caught her in his arms, and was about to call her his own for ever, when she, hastily stepping back, placed her hand upon his mouth, and with her sweetest smile, while she bashfully averted her eyes, gently whispered "Not yet."

CHAPTER XXIX.

(Which may be omitted if the Reader pleases.)

And happily I have arrived at last
Unto the wished haven of my bliss.

"OH ! mamma," exclaimed the lovely young Countess of Milford, who with her husband had arrived in London that evening from their mansion in Wales, in time for one of her mother's elegant *soirées*, "oh ! mamma, I have found her out ! I am quite sure I have found out which is your beautiful heroine and friend ; and I am so glad you did not bring me to her, that I may have the credit of the discovery."

"Provided always that you are right, Theodosia," said her mother, smiling fondly and a little archly upon her.

"Oh ! I *am* right ! I *must* be right ! no one else could be so beautiful and yet so peculiar-looking ! I never saw anything before like the

expression of her countenance ; something so beaming, so refulgent in its happiness, and yet so sweet and chastened, that it gives one the idea, not of earth but of heaven, or at least of one already purified from the dross of earth and the fear of sorrow. It must be she : look here, mamma, between these two persons' shoulders, and you will see who I mean, with a fine-looking man, whom I never saw before, standing beside her."

"It is indeed she, my own Theodosia ; and that fine-looking man is her husband, Mr. Vandeleur."

"He is the picture of happiness too ; I declare they are quite lions in their happiness."

"I am rather surprised at *your* thinking them so for *that* reason, my own gay, happy Theo."

"Yes : but you know, mamma, I don't often see my own face, except when cross and wearied with the trouble of dressing ; and you must observe yourself how different her happiness appears from that of all around her,—so calm, so placid, yet, as I said before, so absolutely refulgent that it seems to shine abroad on us all."

“That is because she has been tried in adversity; and the blessings that *we* thoughtlessly receive as almost our due, she has learned to appreciate as the free and especial mercies of Him who showed her how little they can be commanded without his will. Your observations, my child, are acute and just. I never saw, I never expected to see, such happiness on earth as they enjoy; I really sometimes think it is permitted to them, in order to prove to us that such may be still enjoyed on earth, if we would not ourselves destroy it. You know they at present live in a beautiful little place of mine in ——shire, close to Seaton, because Beanton Park is in lease; and indeed I imagine Gertrude rejoices that it is so, for some time; until, as she says herself, she becomes by degrees more accustomed to the thoughts of returning there. I’m sure I shall dread it, for their settling near me has been a powerful accession of happiness to me.”

“Are they then really agreeable companions, mamma, apart from your peculiar interest in them?”

“Prominently so : they have each cultivated their minds to the utmost, and each have ardent feelings ; he has seen a great deal of life, and she has an incessant flow of imagination. I don’t think I ever had three happier days than I spent with them soon after their arrival last autumn. I was alone at Seaton,—you had gone away from London after your marriage, and your father and brother being detained there by some parliamentary business, I hastened to Seaton before them, and drove over the very evening of my arrival to visit my dear friends in their new abode. I was told they were out walking ; I sent my ponies away to the stables, and strolled out myself in search of them : it was a most lovely evening ; and as there is no room for scenery or magnificent timber at “Le Bouquet,” it is a very paradise of flowers and flowering shrubs, which, in a dewy autumn evening, do really call out all that ever was less than sordid and artificial in one’s feelings ; and, old as I am, I felt their influence so strongly upon that occasion, that, while wandering through

the little wilderness of sweets, I became quite romantic, and worked myself up to expect that happiness which the soul sometimes dreams of, but so seldom sees. I was not disappointed: I found the Adam and Eve of this little paradise, seated under one magnificent lime-tree which is in their lawn, and which forms an arbour of itself. Mr. Vandeleur had their eldest boy upon his knee, and Gertrude a sweet baby in her arms: her head was leaning on her husband's shoulder; but what was my surprise, when I advanced closer, to perceive that she was in tears! They both started up on seeing me; and at the first moment, yielding to custom, I affected not to have noticed Gertrude's tears: she dried them off instantly, and smiling said,

“Nay, duchess, you must not be a hypocrite with me, nor must you be so indifferent about me as not to be anxious to ask the cause of my weeping: it was not sorrow; indeed, I rather think it was the contrary. I had just been wishing that my ever beloved, lamented Herbert could be witness now to the happiness I

enjoy; and Godfrey was endeavouring to persuade me that it probably constitutes some of his own happiness above, and that he is only spared from the knowledge of aught that could afflict him: or if the purified spirits have perfect knowledge,—and it is hard to reconcile their having any, and not all,—he thinks it probable that in their extended foresight they smile at our little misfortunes here, as we do at the mimic woes of childhood, which we scarcely would remove, for the very sake of the transient variety they afford to them and to ourselves.”

“I suppose this little fellow’s name is Herbert?” I observed, kissing the loveliest boy I ever beheld.

“No,” she answered, “Godfrey kindly proposed that it should be, but I could not bear to hear that name profaned even by that beloved being;” and she nearly smothered the boy with kisses in his father’s arms, to make amends for the seeming slight.”

We returned towards the house, the conversation still continuing in a religiously philosophic

strain ; and will you laugh at your mother, my Theodosia, when I tell you that so happy, so charmed, so elevated did I feel by the sight of their happiness, and its rational and diffusive nature, that I sent for Palmer and my dressing-box, and continued with them till the duke returned.

“ But you are very happy yourself, my dearest mamma ; are you not ? ” exclaimed the young countess, suddenly struck with the rapturous manner in which her still lovely and admired mother spoke of the happiness of others ; a subject upon which she never remembered to have heard her expatiate before.

“ Happy, my sweet child ! I am most happy ; how could yours and Clandalton’s mother be otherwise than happy ? But still my happiness is now of a nature so different from theirs, that the variety is delightful ; for though in point of calculation I am but a few years older than Gertrude, yet her feelings of wedded love and happiness are in their first youth still, with all the additional glow and fervour of long suffering turned

into the fruition of joy, while mine have of course sunk into the calm quiet of long habit."

" You think then, mamma, that the habit of loving even one's husband, and being perfectly happy always, deadens one to the enjoyment of it?" inquired the young countess, still almost a bride, with an expression of melancholy in her lovely face.

Her mother did not wish to enter into the subject too closely. " Why, no indeed, my love, I do not ; I scarcely know what I did mean, except what I tried to express at first ; namely, that very young people are so prone to happiness, it is so much their natural state as it were, that they are scarcely more conscious of the blessing than they are of the advantage of having hands or feet ; but when so many years have been spent in the school of discipline and adversity, one not only knows the true value of happiness, but ventures almost to feel that their dark hour, such as all must have on earth, has passed by, and that the future will be all sunshine : such, at least, I know are Gertrude's

and Mr. Vandeleur's feelings ; but then their case is indeed a rare one, and can scarcely be tried by common rules."

"She is a lovely-looking creature at all events ; how long does she remain with you, mamma ?"

"Only till to-morrow," answered the Duchess of Castleton ; "nothing can detain either of them more than a few days from their home : she remained this day solely for the pleasure of seeing you."

"Oh, then I must not indeed lose another moment in making her acquaintance. Come, mamma, and present me."

"Yes ; but I should be sorry to think that this were all you should see of her, or she of you, my love. You must make a point of coming to Seaton this summer, where you have not now been for some years, but where I hope to persuade your father to pass most of his summers in future. I always loved Seaton, but now it has double fascination for me. Mrs. Vandeleur is a first-rate amateur painter ; she per-

fectcd herself in the art in her seclusion, and has done some beautiful pieces which now ornament my gallery : three of them are historical pieces, if I may call them so, of the most critical moments of her own eventful life ; two of them she did in her cottage in Switzerland, and the third she has done since at Mr. Vandeleur's request. I want her to do one more, choosing for the subject the evening I found them and their sweet children seated under the lime-tree, in order to show the happiness they now enjoy ; but hitherto I have been unsuccessful : sometimes she says she no longer has sufficient leisure for painting, and at other times asserts that paintings are only meant to commemorate what has already passed away. But come, love, we have indulged in a *tête-à-tête* too long."

And so, gentle Reader, perhaps have you and I : so, fare thee well !

THE END.

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